

# Alliance for Physician Certification & Advancement™ (APCA) Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Academy Policies

2018 Version 1.0

## APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Academy Policies

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## ADA/Special Needs Policy

The Alliance for Physician Certification & Advancement™ (APCA) Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy assessments have been developed with closed captioning. Candidates with special needs in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 can make other appropriate arrangements as needed that align with the [Code of Conduct Policy](#).

## Appeals Policy

A Candidate or Certificant may submit an appeal of an APCA action or decision within 30 (thirty) days. The specific kinds of appeals that may be considered are explained below. All appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 (thirty) days:

- E-mail [POCUS@APCA.org](mailto:POCUS@APCA.org) with the subject line of “Appeal”

### Ineligibility Appeals

An Ineligibility Appeal may be submitted if an applicant/candidate was found to be ineligible to take or complete an examination and wishes to dispute this decision.

### Results Verification Appeals

Results Verification Appeals may be requested if a candidate has reason to believe that there may have been an error in their results due to technological concerns. Once received, staff will review the candidate results on the assessment(s) in question and determine if technology problems had an adverse impact.

Ineligibility and Results Verification Appeals are the only circumstances for which an appeal may be considered. Appeals will not be considered for: a) the inability to access the assessment(s) on any computer or tablet that meets the requirements outlined in the [Technology/System Requirements Policy](#), or b) an inability to complete the assessment(s) within the length of time provided (please refer to [Time to Complete the Assessment Policy](#)).

## Application Processing Policy

To apply for a certificate or certification in the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Academy, individuals must have a MY APCA identification number. Log in to [MY APCA](#) and navigate to the POCUS tab. When you Apply, you will be directed to the Learning Management System for the full exam-specific application where they will be provided step-by-step directions to complete the application, attestations, verification of pre-requisites, and payment.

If an applicant does not have a MY APCA identification number, a one-time registration process can be completed at [MY APCA](#) prior to applying.

To make sure you have everything needed for the application before applying, take a look at the [Application overview](#).

## Application Audits Policy

Up to 25% of the candidate applications for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy may be audited. If audited, documentation must be submitted within 30 (thirty) days of request. Failure to submit requested documentation within 30 (thirty) days of audit notification will result in a failed audit. Candidates who have been awarded a certificate or certification and fail an audit will have their certificate or certification revoked. Candidates who are found to have submitted falsified or inaccurate information will also fail the audit and may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the [APCA Compliance Policies](#).

For identity verification, and to verify physician status, candidates must submit the following for the audit:

1. A copy of a non-expired government-issued photo identification with signature; the name on the identification must match the name under which the candidate applied for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy; AND
2. A signed form or letter from employer/supervisor or medical director on letterhead stating that the candidate is currently employed as a physician; OR a copy of MD or DO current, valid license to practice.

To verify that prerequisites have been satisfied, candidates must also submit the following:

1. A signed form or letter completed by employer/supervisor or medical director on letterhead attesting to the number of scans obtained or that the candidate has completed at least the minimum number of required scans; AND
2. A signed form or letter completed by employer/supervisor or medical director on letterhead stating that candidate is currently scanning patients (#1 and #2 may be included in the same letter).

To verify that Peer Evaluators are healthcare providers and completed the evaluations independently, Peer Evaluators must submit the following for the audit:

1. A signed form or letter stating that they are healthcare providers and completed the questionnaire independently; AND
2. A copy of non-expired government issued photo identification.

Other documentation may be considered for physicians outside of North America who are unable to provide standard documentation. Such cases will be handled on an individual basis.

## Availability Policy

The APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy content is available online, on-demand, and year round. Periodic system maintenance may cause short-term unavailability.

## Cancellations/Refunds Policy

Requests for cancellations or refunds may be submitted until a candidate starts an assessment. Neither Full nor Partial Refunds will be issued for any certificate or certification that has been started or for which the completion time has been exhausted. All refunds will be processed in the same form as the original payment within 5 (five) business days.

## Code of Conduct Policy

During the application process, candidates applying for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy certificate or certification will need to attest to the veracity of their information; that they are actively practicing and duly authorized by law to practice medicine; and that they understand ongoing authority-to-practice expectations.

In order to access the APCA Point-of-Care assessments, candidates will also be required to complete a Confidentiality and Nondisclosure Agreement. Test (assessment) information is confidential and not to be shared with others. Candidates should test in a private location or take measures to ensure that others cannot view the assessment content.

## Communication Policy

The APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy uses email as its official form of communication. Applicants must supply a valid email address. Any updates to demographic information must be completed in MY APCA.

Applicants should verify that the email in their MY APCA account and in the application is valid and accurate. Applicants who work in organizations that have a high security filter for email messages are strongly encouraged to use personal emails to receive APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy communications.

Examples of APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy communications include instructions, approval to test, receipts and exam confirmation notices. If an expected email is not received within 10 (ten) business days, candidates should look in their trash or quarantine folders before contacting the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy to investigate.

## Exam Results Policy

APCA does not share examination results over the phone, by fax or via e-mail, nor does APCA share results with anyone other than the candidate. Exam results will be made available on each candidates' MY APCA portal and within the APCA Point-of-Care Academy Learning Management System. Results will be displayed as a Pass, Fail, or In Progress. Any certificates earned will be provided electronically to be printed by the candidate.

### APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Assessment

Results for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals assessment are issued electronically via the MY APCA portal and the Learning Management System (LMS) within 24 hours of completing the assessment. Candidates who earn a passing score will be issued an electronic certificate which can be printed by the candidate from the LMS.

### APCA Content-Specific Assessments

Results for the content specific assessments are issued within 30 (thirty) days of the final assessment component being completed. Results are issued electronically via the MY APCA portal and the Learning Management System (LMS). Candidates who earn a passing score on all required assessment components will be issued an electronic certificate/certification which can be printed by the candidate from the LMS. NOTE: During the first 120 days of a Clinical Case-Based Scenario Assessment, there is a possibility that scores may be re-evaluated. This could affect whether or not someone earns their Certificate or Certification.

Certificate and certification status may be verified through APCA online resources which are available to the public.

## Impartiality Policy

The APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy functions under policies intended to demonstrate impartiality, high ethical standards, and validity. APCA does not restrict applicants based on limiting conditions, such as membership to an association or professional society. APCA will not unfairly impede or inhibit access to APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy certificates or certifications for applicants who meet stated policies regarding qualification requirements, renewal requirements, and/or passing APCA's psychometrically-sound assessments.

## Level of Recognition Policy

In addition to earning APCA certificates, candidates will be recognized by APCA for their breadth of Point-of-Care Ultrasound knowledge as demonstrated by earning certificates in multiple content areas:

- 3 content-specific certificates will be acknowledged with Bronze recognition.
- 6 content-specific certificates will be acknowledged with Silver recognition.
- 9 content-specific certificates will be acknowledged with Gold recognition.

By earning a Level of Recognition, certificate renewal dates will be synchronized and periods of validity may be extended (See Renewal Policy.)

## Peer Evaluation Policy

In order to earn an APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy content-specific certificate, all assessment components must be successfully completed, including the Peer Evaluation. Candidates will need to provide, via the application process, the names of a minimum of two healthcare providers that are able to evaluate their ability to obtain clinically-relevant ultrasound images.

Peer Evaluators must have a clinical background in ultrasound and be familiar with the candidate's ability to obtain clinically-relevant, content-specific Point-of-Care Ultrasound images. These individuals will be contacted electronically by APCA and asked to complete a questionnaire about the candidate's clinical abilities. **The first two Peer Evaluation questionnaires completed will determine if the Peer Evaluation assessment is Passed or Failed.**

## Prerequisite & Eligibility Policies

### APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Assessment

There are no prerequisites for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals review and assessment, although applicants will need to possess a MY APCA identification number (which requires that they be physicians) and complete application attestations as described in the [Code of Conduct Policy](#).

Candidates are expected to be prepared for the Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals assessment through the completion of training or educational programs concerning foundational Point-of-Care Ultrasound knowledge. This education should help to ensure that candidates are appropriately prepared to take the summative Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals assessment.

### Content-Specific Assessments

In order to be eligible to take the content-specific assessments, candidates must possess an active APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate or have successfully completed the SPI Examination within the last 5 (five) years or hold a current APCA/ARDMS credential. They must also be actively scanning patients with pathology in the designated content area(s) and attest to performing and participating in the interpretation of a specified number of content-specific cases within the last 2 (two) years.

One or more content-specific certificates must be earned within 3 (three) years of the date that the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate was obtained. After 3 (three) years, if a content-specific certificate has not been earned, candidates would have to reapply for the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate and start the process again. If a candidate has earned at least 1 (one) content-specific certificate and appropriately maintains their certificate, the 3 (three) year time limit would not apply and they would not have to reapply for or retake the Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals assessment for subsequent content-specific certificates.

Candidates applying for Specialty Certifications must satisfy the requirements for each relevant content area represented within their Certification.

Assessments	Prerequisite
APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Assessment	None
APCA POC Content-Specific Assessments (Scenario and Practical exams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate or recognized equivalent</li> <li>• Actively scanning patients in the selected content area</li> <li>• Performing and participating in the interpretation of the specified number of cases per content area within the last two years</li> </ul>
Content Area	Specified number of cases ( <i>perform and participate in the interpretation of Point-of-Care Ultrasounds within the last 2 years</i> ):
Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA)	15 cases
Abdominal Trauma	20 cases
Cardiac	30 cases
Gastrointestinal	25 cases

Hepatobiliary/Spleen	25 cases
Lower Extremity Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	20 cases
Lung	20 cases
Musculoskeletal (MSK) Soft Tissue	20 cases
Obstetrics/First Trimester	25 cases (a combination of transvaginal and transabdominal)
Renal/Genitourinary	20 cases
*Additional content areas will be added as new content is developed.	

## Renewal Policy

### APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificates

APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals certificates will be valid for a period of 3 (three) years and cannot be renewed (but can be earned multiple times). However, if a candidate earns and appropriately maintains one or more APCA content-specific certificate(s) before the initial APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate period of validity expires, the 3 (three) year period of validity will not apply and the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate will remain valid as long as the content-specific certificate remains valid.

### APCA Content-Specific Certificates and Certifications

APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound content-specific certificates and certifications will be valid for a period of 5 (five) years and can be renewed. Certificates and certifications are to be renewed five years from the date on which the certificate or certification was earned or, if a Level of Recognition was achieved, 5 (five) years from the date on which the most recent Level of Recognition was awarded.

Renewal for each content-specific certificate or certification will be accomplished through one of the following:

1. The completion of a recertification assessment consisting of one content-related clinical case scenario for each content area recognized; OR
2. The submission and acceptance of one content-related clinical case for each content area recognized.

Additionally, each Certificant will have to reaffirm their APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy attestations as explained in the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and confirm current practice in each content area.

If desired, a Certificant may start the renewal process early, at year 3 (three) of 5 (five). The renewal anniversary will not change if a certificate holder chooses to complete the requirements early.

## Retake Policy

Candidates wishing to retake an assessment must complete a retake application and remit a retake fee. Once the maximum number of attempts are exhausted, a one-year waiting period will be required before candidates may reapply. Candidates not able to complete their assessments in the original timeframe allowed should request a time extension (see the [Time to Complete Policy](#)).

### APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificates

Candidates may attempt the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamental Certificate assessment a maximum of 3 (three) times. A 30-day waiting period will apply after each attempt. Once the maximum number of attempts are exhausted, a one-year waiting period will be required before the candidate may reapply.

## APCA Content-Specific Certificates

Candidates may attempt the APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Content-Specific Certificate assessments a maximum of 2 (two) times. A 30-day waiting period will apply after each attempt. Once the maximum number of attempts are exhausted, a one-year waiting period will be required before the candidate may reapply.

- Retake applications must be submitted within 90 (ninety) days of a failed assessment
- Any initial passing scores, if applicable, will be retained for the first retake application, allowing candidates to only retake the failed assessment

## Technology Policy (System Requirements)

To access APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Academy content, a computer (Mac or PC) or tablet (Android or iPad) with a common browser will be required. Headphones or speakers are recommended and a reliable internet connection is necessary.

Technical Specifications	
Operating System	Windows 10 Windows 8.1 (32-bit and 64-bit) Windows 7 SP1 (32-bit and 64-bit) Mac OSX 10.10 or newer
Display	Minimum Resolution: 1024 x 768 in 16-bit color
Network Connection	APCA suggests that, whenever possible, exams are completed using a wired network. Wired networks typically provide more reliable exam delivery performance than wireless networks.
Internet Connection	Broadband (DSL, cable or LAN/WAN): 512 kbps up/down
Internet Browsers	Internet Explorer 9+ (preferred), latest versions of Microsoft Edge, Chrome, Firefox, or Safari
Browser Settings	Internet Cookies must be enabled. All Pop-Up blockers must be disabled.
Sound	Headphones (or speakers if in a private location) are acceptable. Note: Closed Captioning is also provided.
Testing Environment	A quiet test taking environment is recommended. Exams include audio and video components. Appropriate lighting and minimal distractions will improve the experience.

## Time to Complete the Assessments Policy

### APCA Point-of-Care Ultrasound Fundamentals Certificate Assessments

After applying for an APCA Point-of-Care Certificate, candidates will have 30 (thirty) days to complete their assessment. Although the assessment must be completed within 30 (thirty) days, it does not have to be completed in one sitting.

### APCA Content-Specific Certificate Assessments

After applying for a specific content certificate, candidates will have 90 (ninety) days to complete all assessment components, including the applicable Scenario Assessment(s) and the Peer Evaluation(s). Candidates will be able to track the Peer Evaluation progress and are responsible for ensuring that the questionnaires are completed within the 90-day timeframe.

### APCA Specialty Certification Assessments

After applying for a specialty certification, candidates will have 180 days to complete the applicable Scenario Assessment(s) and 90 (ninety) days to complete the Peer Evaluation(s). Candidates will be able to track the Peer Evaluation progress and are responsible for ensuring that the questionnaires are completed within the 90-day timeframe.