

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board and International Credentialing for Behaviour Analysts

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The Behavior Analyst Certification Board®, Inc. (BACB®) is an independent non-profit corporation rather than a membership organization. It was founded in May 1998 based on the certification programme that was operated by the (US state of) Florida Department of Children and Families (Starin, Hemingway & Hartsfield, 1993). The first round of BACB examinations took place in May 2000 using the Florida certification examinations. The Florida certification programme was gradually phased out such that by 2004 the BACB became the only behaviour analyst credentialing body in existence. The BACB certification programmes meet rigorous and stringent quality control standards (Shook, 2005) and they are accredited by the National Council for Certifying Agencies, the accreditation body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (2010).

The BACB's Global Mission is to protect consumers of behaviour analysis services worldwide by systematically establishing, promoting, and disseminating professional standards. The BACB's Global Vision is to solve a wider variety of socially significant problems by increasing the availability of qualified behaviour analysts around the world.

The BACB certifies behaviour analysts at two levels: Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®) and the lower level Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst® (BCaBA®). A BCBA may also meet the requirements for a higher level doctoral designation (BCBA-D™) post certification. The BACB also offers a tutor-level credential – the Registered Behavior Technician™ (RBT™).

Eligibility Requirements for BCBA/BCaBA Credentialing

To become a BCBA or BCaBA one must pass the relevant BACB examination. To become eligible to sit the examination one must meet degree, coursework and supervised experience requirements.

For **BCBA examination eligibility** one must possess a master's degree in Psychology, Education or Behaviour Analysis from a university or other suitably accredited higher education institution. One must complete 270 coursework hours of postgraduate level instruction in behaviour analysis specifically allocated to content areas that cover the BACB Task List and ethical standards of the profession (see table 1). Individuals must also have completed 1500 hours of supervised independent fieldwork, 5% of which (75 hours) must be directly supervised by an existing BCBA.

There are two **alternative options for BCBA examination eligibility** that are less well known. Option 2 (the College Teaching option) is for existing faculty members that have been teaching behavior analysis. If the applicant has completed 1 academic year as full-time faculty at a college or university where they have been teaching classes on basic principles of behaviour, single-subject research methods, applications of basic principles and ethical issues, and they have been conducting and publishing behaviour analytic research, then the coursework requirement can be waived. Option 3 (the Doctorate/BCBA Review option) is available to senior practitioners for whom the coursework and supervised experience cannot be easily obtained. If the applicant has had a doctoral degree for at least 10 years where the field of study was behaviour analysis, psychology, education or another related field (subject to BACB approval), and the applicant has had at least 10 years of postdoctoral experience working as a behaviour analyst, and this is independently verified by 3 BCBA's and the applicant's curriculum vitae, then both the coursework and experience requirements can be waived.

However, additional requirements for these alternative options come into effect from 1st January 2016.

From January 1st 2016, Option 2 (the College Teaching option) requires that the applicant has held a faculty appointment for at least 3 years (cumulatively) full-time at a fully accredited higher education institution within a 5-year period. The applicant must have taught at least 5 sections/iterations of behaviour analytic coursework; they must have taught at least 2 behaviour analytic content areas (from concepts and principles of behaviour, single-subject research methods, applied behaviour analysis, ethics in behaviour analysis) in separate courses; each taught course must have been primarily devoted to behaviour analysis; coursework must have been taught at graduate level. Evidence of the teaching requirements must be supported by a letter from the applicant’s head of department and course syllabi. The new research requirements for the College Teaching option are that the applicant must have published at least one article that is behaviour analytic in nature, includes at least one experimental evaluation, is published in a high quality, peer-reviewed journal, and that the applicant was the first or second author.

From January 1st 2016, Option 3 (the Doctorate/BCBA Review option) becomes the Postdoctoral Experience option. The applicant must possess a doctoral degree in behaviour analysis, psychology or education from an accredited higher education institution. The applicant must have at least 10 years of postdoctoral experience practicing behaviour analysis. The duration must be at least 10 years of full-time practice (cumulatively); the practice must have occurred under a relevant state or national professional credential; required documentation includes the applicant’s curriculum vitae, signed attestations from current or former employers, and proof of professional credential. The new Option 3 requirement also involves a supervised experience component where applicants must accrue at least 500 hours of supervised experience that meets the current BACB experience requirements, and this experience must commence subsequent to the 10 years of postdoctoral experience.

For **BCaBA examination eligibility** one must possess any bachelor’s degree, complete 180 coursework hours of instruction in behaviour analysis (see table 1) and have completed 1000 hours of supervised independent fieldwork, 5% of which (50 hours) must be directly supervised by an existing BCBA.

Details regarding appropriate supervised activities, appropriate clients, and the nature and documentation of supervision may be reviewed at the BACB website (www.bacb.com).

	Content Areas	BCBA Hours	BCaBA Hours
	Ethical and Professional Conduct	45	15
	Concepts and Principles of Behaviour Analysis	45	45
Research Methods in Behaviour Analysis	Measurement (including Data Analysis)	25	10
	Experimental Design	20	5
Applied Behaviour Analysis	Identification of the Problem and Assessment	30	30
	Fundamental Elements of Behaviour Change and Specific Behaviour Change Procedures	45	45
	Intervention and Behaviour Change Considerations	10	5
	Behaviour Change Systems	10	5
	Implementation, Management and Supervision	10	5
	Discretionary	30	15
	TOTAL	270	180

Table 1: BCBA and BCaBA coursework hours and content areas

BCBA/BCaBA Examinations

Having met the relevant eligibility criteria for the BCBA or BCaBA examination, individuals are then required to sit and pass that specific examination. The examination itself is a multiple choice examination comprising 150 (BCBA) or 132 (BCaBA) questions. The examinations are administered through Pearson VUE, an independent organisation that has responsibility for administering credentialing and qualification examinations across a range of diverse fields including those related to academia, employment, finance, information technology, law, insurance and even driving tests. Pearson VUE provides computer based testing services in over 400 countries worldwide. Individuals who become eligible to sit one of the BACB examinations are given a four-week time-window to book their preferred examination date, time and site, at four points throughout the year; February, May, August and November. The examination is currently available in English, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, Simplified Chinese (BCaBA only), with more translations being planned. First time takers are more likely to pass the examination (approximately two thirds of first time takers pass) than those that have previously failed and are resitting the examination (approximate one third pass). As of June 2015 there are just over 20,000 BCBA and BCaBAs worldwide and this number appears to be growing exponentially (see Martin & Shook, 2011, for comparative data).

Requirements for RBT Credentialing

To become a RBT one must possess the minimum of a high school diploma or national equivalent. Individuals must then complete 40 hours of basic training in behaviour analysis (within 90 days) in the areas of measurement, assessment, skill acquisition, behaviour reduction, documentation and reporting, professional conduct and scope of practice. Individuals must then pass a competency assessment. The training and the competency assessment may be conducted by a BCBA or a BCaBA.

Maintaining Certification/Registration

BCBA and BCaBA certificants retain their certification by meeting a continuing education requirement over a two-year recertification cycle. BCBA must accumulate a minimum of 32 continuing education units (CEUs) and BCaBAs must accumulate a minimum of 24 CEUs. Four CEUs must be related to ethics. Certificants may accumulate CEUs (one CEU is equivalent to one hour of continuing education) through completion or delivery of further training, attendance at a BACB approved continuing education provider event, attendance and/or completion of an event initiated by the BACB, journal article publication or editorial activities. Alternatively one may retake (and pass) the relevant examination for their certification. BCaBAs must be supervised by BCBA to maintain their certification.

RBTs retain their registration by passing the RBT Competency Assessment each year. RBTs must be supervised by a BCBA or BCaBA to maintain their registration.

BACB Task Lists

The BACB Fourth Edition Task List (for BCBA and BCaBAs) provides the content on which the BACB examinations are built. The RBT Task List provides the content on which the RBT Competency Assessment is based. The Task Lists are periodically reviewed to ensure that the content remains current to the field of behaviour analysis, and this is achieved by the BACB conducting a Job Task Analysis at regular intervals. The Job Task Analysis occurs initially through an invited subject matter expert panel who review the importance of the tasks in the context of the knowledge, skills and abilities of behaviour analysts or technicians. BACB certificants are then asked to review the resulting Task List to rate the importance of the identified tasks. It is important to stress that the

field (i.e. behaviour analysts) is surveyed on the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with the profession and thus it is the field that determines the content of the Task List rather than the BACB (Shook, Johnston & Mellichamp, 2004).

The BACB Task Lists may be downloaded from the BACB website (www.bacb.com).

Why BACB Credentialing?

The benefit of international credentials for those working as behaviour analysts or behaviour technicians is primarily about consumer protection. Having a credential allows consumers (e.g. parents and other professionals) to discriminate between individuals who are appropriately trained and experienced, from those that are not. To help this discrimination and not confuse consumers, it is forbidden to refer to the credential with regard to oneself unless one has the credential – you cannot refer to yourself as a “BCBA (or BCaBA, RBT) in training...” or equivalent. Additional benefits include the assurance of quality and consistency across behaviour analytic practitioners, and portability. A BCBA (or BCaBA, RBT) credential should be the same all over the world. Many countries, including Romania, do not yet recognize applied behaviour analysis as a separate and distinct profession, unlike psychology, speech and language therapy, law, medicine etc. The adoption of a professional credential would be important in establishing the profession by virtue of providing a definition and identity for behaviour analysts. Professions are defined by who is providing them rather than what is provided: clinical psychologists practice clinical psychology, lawyers practice law, behaviour analysts practice behaviour analysis.

References

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