



THE PATHWAY TO ABD CERTIFICATION

In 2018, the American Board of Dermatology (ABD) [began implementing a new certification pathway](#) to emphasize the application of knowledge using clinically relevant case scenarios.

The pathway features a staged evaluation with a **BASIC Exam** designed for first-year residents, covering dermatology fundamentals; **CORE Exam** modules testing more advanced knowledge of senior residents about dermatology's major clinical areas; and an **APPLIED Exam** given after residency, which tests the ability to apply knowledge in clinical situations.

Diplomates certified in 2021 were the first to complete the new pathway to certification. [Responses to a survey](#) of the candidates who took the 2021 APPLIED Exam were largely positive, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the CORE Exam assessed knowledge in the four key areas; and that the APPLIED Exam assessed how well they could apply that knowledge.

The graphic below provides an overview of the certification process.

| YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 | POST-GRADUATION |
|----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| BASIC EXAM April | CORE EXAM February <i>1-2 modules may be taken</i> | CORE EXAM July, November & February <i>1-4 modules may be taken</i> | APPLIED EXAM July |

BASIC EXAM

- Evaluates fundamental knowledge and skills
- Designed specifically for first-year residents
- Informational only, not pass/fail
- Four-hour exam
- Offered on one day in April
- Proctored by programs

CORE EXAM

- Part 1 of the Certification Exam
- Tests more advanced knowledge appropriate for residents in latter half of residency
- Four modules: medical, pediatric, surgical, and dermatopathology
- Modules are pass/fail
- Candidates must pass all four modules before becoming eligible for the APPLIED Exam
- Each module is a stand-alone exam of about two hours
- Offered in February of 2nd year: 1-2 modules may be taken
- Offered three times during the 3rd year: 1-4 modules may be taken at each sitting
- Residents choose which module(s) to take at each sitting
- May be taken after graduation if not completed prior to graduation
- Taken via Pearson VUE online proctor or at a Pearson VUE test center

APPLIED EXAM

- Part 2 of the Certification Exam
- Tests application of knowledge in clinically relevant scenarios
- Must successfully complete residency and CORE Exam modules to qualify
- Full day exam
- Offered annually in July
- Taken at Pearson VUE test centers