



CAGC Certification Board Certification Handbook

Updated January 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	2
Exam information	3
Credential Review, Board Eligibility and Exceptional Circumstances	6
Fees and Deadlines	8
Description of Required Documents	9
Pathway A	11
Pathway B	12
Pathway C	13
Pathway D	14
Re-examination	15
Recertification by examination	15
Examination day	16
Questions	18

Introduction

This handbook is designed to provide the information for individuals interested in applying for the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC) Certification Board Examination. The Certification Board reserves the right to alter these policies as necessary for future cycles of the examination. Please read this handbook carefully. The specific application forms are contained in individual documents and will be posted on the CAGC website. The forms specific to the exam year must be completed.

Application Pathways

A candidate can certify through the pathway that applies to his/her situation.

- **Pathway A**
 - Candidates who are graduates of a Masters program in Genetic Counselling accredited by an ABGC/ACGC accredited program
- **Pathway B**
 - Candidates who are graduates of a Masters program in Genetic Counselling, at an international university that is not ABGC/ACGC accredited
- **Pathway C (Pre-approved Canadian Programs)**
 - Candidates who are graduates of a Masters program in Genetic Counselling at a Canadian university that is not ABGC/ACGC accredited but has CAGC pre-approval status
- **Pathway D**
 - Candidates who are graduates of a Masters program in Genetic Counselling at an international university and have a current certification either from the ABGC, GCRB or HGSA. Other international certifications will be considered.
- **Re-Examination**

Candidates who were unsuccessful or deferred in the last exam cycle and are applying to re-write the exam.
- **Recertification by examination**
 - Canadian certified counsellors who choose to recertify by writing the examination (See Recertification Protocol).

Candidates are responsible for completing the correct application forms in order to be considered. Detailed information regarding the application requirements for each application pathway can be found below and in the summary table at the end of the document. The application form and documents can be submitted in English or French. The deadline to submit an application is posted on the CAGC website.

Exam information

The CAGC Certification Examination is a computer-based exam hosted and proctored by Yardstick Inc. Both English and French versions of the examination will be available on a single platform and candidates will have the ability to toggle between both languages. It is recommended that candidates plan to write in a single language. Moving between the two languages does take additional time and candidates choosing to do so should plan accordingly. Extra time will not be granted.

The exam will be three hours in length. There is no scheduled break during this time.

Description

The CAGC Knowledge-Based Competencies are the basis for examination. . The Knowledge-Based Competencies document is available on the CAGC website. A predetermined percentage of examination questions representing factual knowledge and information interpretation within each of the areas in the Knowledge-Based Competencies have been selected. Not all areas will be equally represented but are weighted according to skills required in current genetic counselling practice. Each examination question is linked to a specific domain within the Knowledge-Based Competencies. The examination questions are written from a Canadian perspective and are supported by Canadian practice guidelines and reference whenever possible.

The questions have been designed to test the candidate's knowledge, as well as the qualities of discrimination, judgment, and reasoning. Descriptions of laboratory situations or problems presented in narrative, tabular, or graphic formats are followed by questions designed to determine the candidate's knowledge and comprehension of the situation described. Pedigrees and other graphics can be enlarged within the testing platform by clicking on the image.

Scoring

The certification examination consists of approximately 150 multiple-choice questions. Each answer is worth one point. Scores will be based on the number of correct answers. There is no penalty for wrong answers. Unanswered questions will be treated as incorrect.

Passing Score

The goal of the examination is the certification of genetic counsellors who have a reasonable base of knowledge and skills in genetic counselling. Candidates will be scored against an independently set score that is considered to be achievable by a competent genetic counsellor. Previous passing scores have ranged from 70-75%.

Reporting of Examination Results

Candidates can expect to receive a copy of their examination results within two months of the examination. Failure to receive results should be reported to the Chairperson of the Certification Board. Please notify the Administrative Office of any address or email change.

If an approved individual defers an exam it will count as one exam attempt. If an individual does not pass the exam after two attempts and they wish to become CAGC certified, they will be required to submit a complete new application and logbook for the next exam cycle.

In order to assist Genetic Counselling Programs evaluate their curriculum and program content, scores will be released to Program Directors under the following guidelines:

- No personal information will EVER be released.
- Individual scores will not be released.

- Data released to Program Directors may include the range, median, and mean scores of program graduates and of all candidates writing the examination. Content specific data may also be provided.
- Program Directors will be provided with cumulative data every second examination cycle.

Examination Schedule

The certification examination is currently offered annually, but the examination cycle may be altered at the discretion of the Certification Board. Details of the next examination, any change in the examination cycle, as well as other pertinent information, will be published on the website.

Examination Location

The examination will be made available at a minimum of two Canadian locations. The availability of additional examination locations, within Canada, will be disclosed to approved candidates and details will be posted on the website.

Once a candidate selects an examination site, no changes will be allowed and an applicant must write the exam at the site selected. If the candidate shows up at another site, they will NOT be allowed to sit the exam and will forfeit one exam cycle.

Special Services for Persons with a Disability

A person with a disability may request special accommodations and arrangements to take the examination on the national testing date. Candidates wishing to make such a request are asked to submit a letter along with medical documentation outlining the reason for the special accommodations and the recommended arrangements. **This documentation should be sent with their completed application by the application deadline.**

Appeals

Each examination is thoroughly reviewed before the examination date to ensure that all questions relate directly to the Knowledge-Based Competencies and are relevant for Canadian Genetic Counsellors. After the examination, the performance of each question is reviewed and poorly performing questions are removed from the examination, if necessary. Therefore, no appeals will be entertained based on the content or passing score of the examination.

Professional proctors are present at every examination site to address technical problems or other disruptions. All such technical problems or disruptions are reported to the Certification Board immediately after the examination. Accommodations to mitigate the impact of such disruptions are made, either by the proctor at the time of the examination, or by the Certification Board at the time of the examination scoring. Therefore, no appeals will be entertained based on technical problems or other examination site disruptions.

If a Candidate has a reason for appeal other than the ones listed above, they may submit an appeal. Appeals must be lodged, in writing, to the Administrative Office of the CAGC within 3 months from the date of the examination. The Certification Board will review each appeal and provide a written response within 3 months of receipt. There is a \$75 fee for all appeals. Additional expenses incurred as a result of the appeal will be the sole responsibility of the candidate, including any legal fees. **The Certification Board will not discuss, by email or phone, appeals or possible grounds for appeals with a Candidate unless a formal appeal has been lodged.**

Credential Review, Board Eligibility and Exceptional Circumstances

Credential Review

Applications to write the CAGC Certification Examination will be completed online; the accompanying documents will be uploaded on the CAGC website at the time of application. Upon receipt of the completed application and the application fee, all credentials will be reviewed by the Certification Board.

Candidates must have submitted their completed application form, director statement (for current students) and paid their fees by the application deadline. Reference letters must be received or postmarked by the application deadline. Current students must submit their transcript OR a 'Confirmation of eligibility to graduate' letter by July 31st. If a 'Confirmation of eligibility to graduate' letter is submitted for credential review, successful candidates must submit their transcripts before using the designation Canadian Certified Genetic Counsellor and receiving their certificate.

The Certification Board approves candidates for admission to the examination at its discretion. Once applications have been approved, individuals will receive a letter confirming that they are eligible to sit for the examination. Additional information regarding the examination time, date, and location will be provided at that time.

Candidacy Requirements

The CAGC Certification Board limits eligibility for candidacy to those applicants who meet predetermined criteria. The Certification Board may, at its sole discretion, declare a candidate ineligible to sit the Certification Board Examination if training, background, or references are deemed inadequate. Any person applying for candidacy found to have submitted fraudulent documents or to have misrepresented their education or experience will be barred from sitting future Canadian certification examination.

Board Eligibility

Candidates who meet the criteria to apply to write the Canadian certification examination through Pathway A,B,C or D are considered to be 'Board Eligible'. This term is used by the candidate at their discretion. The Certification Board does not deem a candidate eligible to write the examination until their application has been approved

Upon approval of their applications, Candidates will have up to 3 attempts to pass the examination within 5 years of their graduation. Candidates who apply through Pathway D will have 3 attempts within 5 years of the approval of their application. If a candidate is unsuccessful at achieving Certification within this timeframe, they may be eligible to reapply through another pathway.

Exceptional Circumstances

Deferrals: Individuals may request a deferral after their application is processed but before the Deferral deadline. Requests for deferral received after the Deferral deadline will not be entertained (see Fee and Deadlines). The application fee will not be refunded and cannot be used towards a subsequent application. A deferral does not count as an examination attempt. A deferral does not extend the Candidate Board Eligibility beyond the 5 years described in the Board Eligibility section.

Failure to Attend: Individuals who do not attend the examination and fail to notify the Certification Board will lose one exam attempt and all of their fees.

Medical Emergency: If a medical emergency prevents an individual from writing the exam, an additional exam attempt and partial refund of fees may be considered. The emergency must be substantiated by a physician's note (with clearly written name, address and credentials).

Cancellation/Withdrawal: An application cannot be cancelled or withdrawn. Please refer to definitions of Deferrals and Failure to Attend

Incomplete Applications:

If an application is incomplete, candidates have until two weeks after the application deadline to complete their paperwork. Applications that are not complete two weeks after the application deadline will be considered a Deferral. Please refer to the Deferral section for details related to eligibility and fees.

If a 'Confirmation of eligibility to graduate' letter is submitted for credential review, successful candidates must submit their transcripts before using the designation Canadian Certified Genetic Counsellor and receiving their certificate. This would not be considered an incomplete application.

Fees and Deadlines

Fees:

Pathway	Application Fee	Administration and Examination Fees	Total	Late Fee
A	\$75	\$525	\$600	\$50
B	\$75	\$525	\$600	\$50
C	\$75	\$525	\$600	\$50
D	\$75	\$625	\$700	\$50
Re-write	NA	\$500	\$500	NA
Recertification by examination	\$75	\$525	\$600	\$50

Timelines:

Institutional applications for Pathway C due	October 1
Applications open	March 1
Late Application fees apply	May 1
Final Application deadline	June 1
Notification of Applicant acceptance	July 2
Deferral deadline	3 weeks (21 days) before the examination
Examination	August (exact date varies, please refer to the website)

Description of Required Documents:

Below are descriptions of the documents that may be required, depending on the application Pathway. Refer to the detailed description of each Pathway to determine the required documents for that Pathway.

1. **Official Transcript (and Program Director Statement for student applicants):** An official transcript from the University where the Genetic Counselling program was undertaken.

For candidates who are enrolled in a Genetic Counselling program at the time of the application:

- The transcript must be received by July 31st of the examination year.
- Students must submit a Program Director Statement (form available on the CAGC website). The original document should be scanned as a pdf for uploading to the online application form. Retain the document with the Program Director's original signature as the Certification Board reserves the right to review the original document and signatures.
- If there is outstanding coursework at the time of application (for example the thesis is not complete), a "*Confirmation of eligibility to graduate letter*" from the graduate studies office must be received by July 31st of the examination year. If the candidate fails to provide the confirmation of eligibility to graduate letter by July 31st, he/she will not be allowed to write the exam for this cycle and the application fee will be retained by the Board.
- All aspects of the program **MUST** be completed by the examination date. If a candidate has not completed all aspects of the program by the examination date, he/she will not be allowed to write the exam for this cycle and the application fee will be retained by the Board.

2. **Letters of Recommendation:** Letters of support from the candidate's clinical supervisors or individuals familiar with the candidate's credentials and abilities in a clinical medical genetics setting, stating their belief that the candidate is a competent genetic counsellor. The referees must be certified by the CAGC, ABMG, CCMG, ABGC, CSPQ (Medical Genetics), RCPC (Genetics), GCRB (UK), or HGSA (Australia).

Original letter should be provided by the referee in a sealed envelope. Applications to write the CAGC Certification Board are made online, however letters of recommendation must be mailed along with the candidate's transcript to the CAGC office prior to the application deadline.

3. **Case Logbook:** A case logbook listing 50 genetic counselling cases and the roles the candidate performed in each case. All cases must have been undertaken in the 4-year period prior to the examination date. The logbook may be used for every eligible examination attempt within a given examination pathway.

The logbook should reflect a breadth of experience and must be signed by the individual directly supervising the candidate for each case. The Masters in Genetic Counselling Program Director's signature on the logbook forms is allowed only if they have been directly involved in the supervision of the case. The case supervisor must be certified by the CAGC, ABMG, CCMG, ABGC, CSPQ (Medical Genetics), RCPC (Genetics), GCRB (UK), or HGSA (Australia). The logbook form is available online. Please complete as many pages as necessary and scan into a single pdf for uploading to the online application form. Please retain the originals as the Certification Board reserves the right to review the original document and signatures.

For more information, please refer to the Logbook Instruction document on the CAGC website.

Applicants applying for certification through Pathway A-1 do not require a logbook to be submitted to the CAGC Certification Board.

4. Request for Special Consideration: Candidates are asked to provide a detailed explanation of their motivations for requesting special consideration to sit for this examination, and why they believe that they should be declared eligible. Requests should be one page or less. There is no dedicated “Request for Special Consideration” form on the CAGC website and candidates have to create their own document and save it as a pdf document for uploading to the online application form.
5. Descriptions of Course Content: For each course of the Master’s degree listed on the transcript, please provide a one-paragraph description of course content. Links to websites will not be reviewed, but enclosed descriptions from websites and course catalogues are acceptable. Descriptions longer than one paragraph will not be reviewed. Please save as a pdf document for uploading to the online application form.
6. Description of Clinical Training: Using the Description of Clinical Training form (available on the CAGC website), candidates must describe in detail the clinical training and supervision they have received in genetic counselling (other than coursework). Candidates must use one copy of the form per type of clinical training/rotation. Candidates are asked to complete as many copies of the Description of Clinical Training form as necessary and to scan into a single document for uploading to the online application form.
7. List of Professional Activities: List professional activities and continuing education (i.e. professional meetings attended in the past 5 years, current professional memberships, etc.) relating to Genetics/Genetic Counselling. There is no dedicated form on the CAGC website and candidates have to create their own document and save it as a pdf document for uploading to the online application form.
8. One page CV/Resume. Please save as a pdf document for uploading to the online application form.

Pathway A

Pathway A candidates have a Masters degree from an ABGC/ACGC accredited program or will graduate from an ABGC/ACGC accredited program by June 1st of the exam year. Candidates who have completed all program requirements by the examination date are also be eligible. The training program must have been ABGC/ACGC accredited for the entire duration of the candidate's training.

Candidates who have completed their training in non-ABGC/ACGC accredited programs must apply through Pathway B, C, or D.

There are several categories of Pathway A applicants:

A-1 Candidates who graduated within the last 5 calendar years and are applying to write the examination for the first time.

Examples:

- 1) Candidates who complete their program requirements after June 1, 2016 may apply to write the exam before May 30, 2021.
- 2) Candidates who complete their program requirements after June 1, 2019 may apply to write the exam before May 30, 2024.

A-2 This pathway was retired in January 2020

A-3 This pathway was retired in January 2020

A-4 Candidates who were previously certified but have allowed their certification to lapse

A-5 Candidates who previously applied for certification but failed to achieve certification after 3 attempts within 5 calendar years.

All Pathway A candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Official Transcript
3. Letters of Recommendation (two)
4. Case Logbook (not required for Pathway A1)
5. Fees

Pathway B

Pathway B candidates have a Masters degree from a program established for the training of genetic counsellors that is not ABGC/ACGC accredited. For candidates who have graduated or are graduating from non-ABGC/ACGC accredited programs, each application to write the CAGC Certification Board exam will be assessed on an individual basis.

All Pathway B candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Official Transcript
3. Letters of Recommendation (three)
4. Case Logbook
5. Request for Special Consideration
6. Description of Course Content
7. Description of Clinical Training
8. List of Professional Activities
9. One page CV/Resume
10. Fees

Pathway C

Pathway C candidates have a Masters degree in Genetic Counselling from a Canadian program that is not ABGC/ACGC accredited. The institution must have received pre-approval from the CAGC Certification Board on the basis of good professional standing and a documented history of candidates that have been deemed eligible through Pathway B.

In order for a candidate to apply through Pathway C, their institution's program director must apply for Pathway C status by submitting the following via email to certification@cagc-accg.ca:

Descriptions of Course Content: For each course required of the Master's degree, please provide a one-paragraph description of course content. Links to websites will not be reviewed, but enclosed descriptions from websites and course catalogues are acceptable. Descriptions longer than one paragraph will not be reviewed. Course content should document coursework in medical human genetics, human biology and behavioural sciences (i.e. counselling theory, crisis intervention, psychological assessment, grief/bereavement counselling, interviewing and counselling techniques, ethical/ cultural issues etc.).

The above documentation must be received from the institution by September 30 prior to the examination year. Institutions will be notified of their Pathway C status by December 1. Once approved by the Certification Board, graduates of pre-approved programs may apply through Pathway C. Pre-approval designation will be valid for three examination cycles and will only be valid for candidates that graduated within that time period. Pre-approval is invalidated if there are significant changes to the program, such as the duration of the program, the number of required courses or the number of clinical rotations.. The programs with pre-approved status will be posted on the CAGC website. Programs with Pathway C approved status are encouraged to inform their eligible students of this option.

All Pathway C candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Official Transcript
3. Letters of recommendation (three)
4. Case Logbook
5. Description of Clinical Training
5. Letters of Recommendation
6. Fees

Pathway D

Pathway D candidates have a Masters degree from a program established for the training of genetic counsellors and have a current and valid certification from the ABGC, the GCRB or HGSA and be in good standing with the corresponding organization; other certifications may be considered. Although clinical experience in a genetic counselling role in Canada is strongly encouraged, it is not a requirement to apply to Pathway D.

Candidates who apply to Pathway D and fail the certification exam can re-apply at the next examination cycle through the “Re-Examination” pathway. Candidates who fail the certification exam on their third attempt will no longer be eligible for Pathway D; they may apply through Pathway B.

All Pathway D candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Request for Special Consideration
3. Letters of Recommendation (three)
4. Proof of certification from the ABGC, GCRB or HGSA, or from another certification body.
5. Fee

Re-Examination

Candidates who have previously been deemed eligible to sit the exam but did not achieve certification may write the examination in the next available cycle. Eligibility is therefore valid 3 attempts within 5 years. Candidates who do not successfully achieve certification within two consecutive attempts must re-apply for eligibility, submitting a complete new application (including logbook) with supporting documentation and fees.

Candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Fee

Recertification by Examination

Certification is valid for 10 years. Those individuals choosing to recertify by writing the examination instead of collecting Continuing Practice Credits (CPCs) and Continuing Education Credits (CECs) will be required to pass the Certification Board examination before their certification expires. (See Recertification Protocol).

Individuals who allow their certification to expire must apply for certification as a new candidate (Pathway A or B).

Candidates are required to submit the following documentation and pay all appropriate fees by the application deadline. Detailed description of the required documentation can be found on page 9.

1. Online Application Form
2. Fee

Examination Day

Reporting Time/Check-in

Candidates are advised to report 15-30 minutes prior to the examination starting time. At the time of check-in, each candidate must present:

1. The letter of confirmation received from the CAGC Certification Board approving their application.
2. A form of government-issued photo identification (e.g. driver's license, passport, age of majority card).

Candidates who arrive late will not be admitted and will lose one exam attempt and forfeit their examination fee.

Supplies Required

A non-programmable calculator will be permitted. Calculators will be checked by the invigilators prior to admission to the examination site. Candidates may wish to bring a pencil to make notes. No other supplies will be allowed and no study materials/papers may be brought into the test site.

Test Security

Examinees who attempt to violate security will not have their examination processed and will fail to achieve certification.

Communication between examinees during the examination is not permitted and will not be tolerated. If a candidate is suspected of cheating, a warning will be given and the candidate will be allowed to finish the exam. A full report of the incident will be made by the site invigilator and presented to the Certification Board after the exam. The report will be reviewed and investigated. A decision as to whether or not to score the exam will be made at that time.

A candidate caught with materials for cheating or found to be giving or receiving assistance will be required to submit their exam and leave the room. In this circumstance, the candidate's exam will not be scored and the examination will be considered a failure. The candidate may be barred from sitting any future Canadian certification examination.

Any irregularities of conduct or disruptive behaviour in the exam room will be reported and the chief invigilator may ask the candidate to leave.

Technical Problems or Disruptions

All significant technical problems or other disruptions are reported to the Certification Board immediately after the examination. Accommodations, such as additional examination time, may be made by the proctor at the time of the examination as the results of a technical problem or disruption. The Certification Board will take all technical problems or other disruptions into account during the post-examination evaluation. Candidates should make the proctor aware of any technical problems or other disruptions that may affect their examination performance. If a technical problem occurs during the exam and is not reported to the proctor, an appeal based on the technical problem will not be considered.

Additional Comments

To minimize possible distractions during the examination, candidates will not be allowed to bring food into the test site. As an additional courtesy, we also ask that candidates please refrain from wearing perfume or other scented products as they may cause discomfort to those who have allergies or sensitivities.

Questions

Questions regarding the certification process and completed applications should be directed to the Certification Board Chair:

CAGC Certification Board
PO Box 52083
Oakville, ON L6J 7N5
T: 905-847-1363
F: 905-847-3855
certification@cagc-accg.ca