

# ABDSM Certification Program Guidelines and Policies

## American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine Certification Program

The American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine (ABDSM) is an independent, nonprofit, self-designated board certifying licensed dentists who treat sleep-related breathing disorders. The ABDSM designates an individual who it certifies as a *Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine*.

The ABDSM certification process tests knowledge and clinical proficiency in dental sleep medicine, which treats sleep-related breathing disorders such as snoring, upper airway resistance syndrome (UARS) and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). ABDSM certification does not represent a new specialty of dentistry or medicine, nor does it grant or imply any legal qualification, privilege or license to practice. Rather, certification recognizes those dentists duly licensed by law who have successfully completed the certification requirements established by the ABDSM.

Dentists who wish to be certified by the ABDSM must meet all eligibility requirements and prerequisites, apply for certification, pass the examination, and comply with all ABDSM rules, guidelines and maintenance of certification requirements.

The ABDSM certification process **does not** include submission of cases to the ABDSM.

## Guidelines and Policies

The following sections address important requirements and policies that are to be followed by all certificants and candidates for certification.

### Eligibility Requirements

Certification by the ABDSM is open to qualified applicants who are permanent residents of the United States, including territories, and Canada. International applicants who are not permanent residents of these countries are *not* eligible to attain ABDSM Diplomate status. For those individuals, International Certificant status is available.

Individuals are eligible to apply for ABDSM certification if they fully meet one of the three following eligibility categories. **If you do not meet all of the criteria for one of these categories, do not apply for ABDSM certification.**

### Clinical Applicant Eligibility

Clinical applicants must hold, at a minimum, a dental degree (DDS or DMD) or its equivalent and an active unrestricted license to practice dentistry in the United States, including territories, or Canada.

### Academic Applicant Eligibility

Academic applicants must hold, at a minimum, a dental degree (DDS or DMD) or its equivalent and an active restricted license as dental school faculty to practice dentistry in the United States or Canada. Academic applicants must currently be a full-time employee of a dental school that is accredited by either the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada or the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association. Applicants with a limited license (student) are not eligible to apply as academic applicants.

## International Certificant Applicant Eligibility

International Certificant status has been created to allow applicants who are not permanent residents of the United States or Canada an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in dental sleep medicine. International Certificant applicants must hold, at a minimum, a dental degree (DDS or DMD) or its equivalent and an active unrestricted license to practice dentistry. International Certificant applicants must practice dentistry outside of the United States (including territories) and Canada.

## Prerequisite Requirements

### Dental License with Expiration Date

Applicants must provide a copy of their current dental license with expiration date. If the dental license expires before the examination date, a renewed copy of the dental license is required and must be submitted to ABDSM before it expires. Applicants cannot sit for the exam without proof of a current valid dental license. International licenses should be submitted in English or with a certified English translation.

### AADSM Mastery Program

Successful completion of the AADSM Mastery Program or a dental sleep medicine education program accredited by the AADSM as an AADSM Mastery Program Provider is required prior to applying for the exam. For more information on the AADSM Mastery Program visit [aadsm.org/mastery](http://aadsm.org/mastery).

**Do not apply if you have not completed all requirements of the AADSM Mastery Program or an AADSM-accredited Mastery Program.** Approved applicants can take the examination during any exam window within their eligibility period (three years following completion of the AADSM Mastery Program or an accredited version of the program). Those who apply for the exam outside of the three-year window must submit documentation of an additional 65 CE hours earned within the three-years immediately preceding the application date that meet the requirements in the *Continuing Education Requirements for Reapplicants* section of these guidelines.

## Application Requirements

When evaluating your application, determine whether you meet all requirements. **If you do not meet all the prerequisite and eligibility requirements, do not submit an application.**

The prerequisites, application, and application fees must be submitted through the online application system at <https://www.abdsm.org/> by the stated dates for the examination window you have chosen. The application and exam dates are listed in these guidelines and are posted at [www.ABDSM.org](http://www.ABDSM.org).

Application approval is not automatic. Applications will be reviewed by the ABDSM for completion and to ensure eligibility requirements and prerequisites are met. In the event a submitted application is incomplete, candidates will be provided up to two weeks to correct or withdraw the application. Complete applications that meet the eligibility requirements and prerequisites will be approved by the ABDSM board of directors. Candidates will be notified via email of application acceptance and will subsequently receive additional information regarding exam scheduling.

Applications that are not complete or do not meet eligibility criteria or prerequisites will be denied.

Candidates will be notified via email of application denial. Refunds will be granted according to the refund policy explained later in these guidelines.

Notification of application approval or denial is sent via email approximately 6 weeks after submission.

## Application Submission

Candidates must submit the completed online application form, documentation of all prerequisites and the examination fee via the ABDSM website ([www.abdsm.org](http://www.abdsm.org)) prior to the posted application deadline for the desired testing window.

## Important Dates

	Summer 2025 Exam	Winter 2026 Exam
Application Window	December 1, 2024 – May 9, 2025	May 10, 2025 – November 1, 2025
Exam Window	July 20 – August 3, 2025	January 18 – February 1, 2026

*Notification of examination results is mailed approximately 6 weeks after the exam window.*

The application system will send an email confirming successful application submission. If you do not receive the confirmation, first check your email’s spam or junk folder for the message. Contact [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org) if you did not receive confirmation of submission.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that applications, fees, and pre-requisites are submitted on or before the stated deadlines. No exception will be made to this requirement. Before you send your application make sure it is complete to the last detail and in the correct order.

## Application Fees

New applicants or applicants who must reestablish their exam eligibility	\$995.00
Federal Service Dentists <i>currently serving full time in federal service in the US and Canada (Air Force, Navy, Army, Federal Public Health Service, or Veterans Administration); Subject to verification of status</i>	\$250.00
Retake Fee - During established eligibility period	\$395.00

*Fee payable in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank*

## Refund Policy

### Application Not Accepted

Applications that are incomplete or that do not meet the stated eligibility and prerequisite requirements may be withdrawn by the candidate prior to ABDSM board of directors’ review. If a candidate withdraws an unapproved application, they are entitled to a full refund of the application fee, less \$50 administrative fee.

Submitted applications that are reviewed and not approved by the ABDSM board of directors are entitled to a partial refund at the time the application is denied. \$395 will be refunded to new clinical and academic candidates. Federal Service dentists will be refunded \$95. Retake candidates will be refunded \$150 if the application is not accepted.

### **Application Withdrawn**

The refund policy for applications that have not yet been approved or rejected by the ABDSM is described above.

Candidates with an approved application may withdraw their application or transfer to another testing window upon written notification to the ABDSM at [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org). For information on transfers, see the *Application Transfer* section.

Candidates who withdraw their application 30 days prior to the first date of the testing window are entitled to a refund. \$395 will be refunded (\$95 for Federal Service dentists and \$150 for retakes).

Candidates who withdraw their application 29 days or less prior to the first day of the testing window are not entitled to a refund, except when the withdrawal is the result of a documented emergency. Candidates may apply for an emergency late withdrawal refund (amount according to the above fee schedule) by submitting proper documentation of the emergency to the ABDSM at [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org).

### **Application Transfers**

Candidates who have received approval from the ABDSM board of directors to sit for the examination may request to transfer their application to the next immediate exam window. A request to transfer must be submitted in writing to the ABDSM at [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org). If approved, a transfer request for any application requires payment of a \$395 transfer fee. The option to transfer an application is not available to unapproved applications.

Whether or not a second application transfer will be approved after a first-time transfer is granted depends on when the applicant completed the AADSM Mastery Program. If the applicant completed the program more than three years prior to the selected examination window, a second transfer request will not be approved. In this case, the applicant must submit a new application, pay the full fee (\$995), and submit documentation of 65 CE credits that meet the requirements as outlined in the *Continuing Education Requirements for Reapplicants* section of these guidelines. Retaking the AADSM Mastery Program in its entirety will also satisfy this CE requirement. An approved application can be transferred no more than two times in total, after which time the application will be retired and no refund will be issued. Applicants are then welcome to submit a new application, subject to all applicable guidelines and fees at the time of application.

### **Examination Scheduling and Administration**

The examination is administered as a proctored computer-based exam [via Kryterion testing centers](#) located around the world or as an online exam that may be taken from home. Candidates whose applications have been approved will receive scheduling instructions from ABDSM

approximately 10 business days after notification of application approval. It is the candidate's responsibility to schedule their examination time at a testing center or via remote testing at home. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure they can meet all the testing requirements should they choose to test remotely. Testing center schedules and online proctor availability will vary by site and may not have weekend availability. Testing schedules typically become available approximately 90 days in advance of a testing date, but this may vary by site.

*Disclaimer:* The testing centers and remote assessment software are owned and operated by an independent third-party. The testing environment and conditions may vary between centers. The ABDSM has no control over and is not responsible for the quality of the testing environment or conditions at the particular testing center or remote assessment selected by the applicant.

### **Applicants with Disabilities**

The ABDSM recognizes that individuals with disabilities may wish to take the examination and will make reasonable accommodations for applicants with verified disabilities. The ABDSM supports the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Applicants are reminded, however, that auxiliary aids (and services) can only be offered if they do not fundamentally alter the measurement of skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test (Americans with Disabilities Act, Public Law 101-336). Applicants who request accommodations due to a disability must advise the ABDSM in writing at [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org) at least 30 days prior to the testing window in which the candidate is testing.

The applicant may be asked to submit appropriate documentation of the disability and a description of previous accommodation provided during other examinations. If the ABDSM deems it necessary, an independent medical assessment may be requested at the expense of the ABDSM.

### **Examination Content**

The ABDSM board of directors directs the composition of the certification examination. The certification examination is comprised of one hundred and fifty (150) multiple-choice questions. Applicants are allowed three (3) hours to complete the examination. The examination tests applicants on airway anatomy and physiology, adult and pediatric sleep medicine, oral appliance therapy, alternative treatment modalities, evaluation, treatment and follow-up care. A detailed review of examination content areas can be found at [abdsm.org/examcontentareas](http://abdsm.org/examcontentareas).

### **Examination Scoring**

The ABDSM certification examination is scored according to psychometrically validated principles. Individual questions are marked right or wrong based on a pre-identified key, and pass/fail scoring is based on a statistical evaluation of the difficulty level of the examination. This is intended to provide a fair exam with equitable difficulty for all candidates no matter which year they take the exam.

All scoring is performed without knowledge of the candidate's identity, and all decisions concerning examination scoring are made before matching names and applicant code numbers to specific results. Individual scores will not be changed.

## **Examination Results**

Candidates are informed of their exam results via regular mail. Actual scores, regardless of the results, will not be provided; the ABDSM provides candidates with notification as to whether they passed the exam or did not pass. Results are not available by telephone. Information regarding the number of candidates who passed or failed the examination will not be provided.

## **Appeal Procedure**

Candidates may appeal a negative determination (rejection of prerequisites or failure of examination) by submitting a written explanation to [info@ABDSM.org](mailto:info@ABDSM.org) of the reason for refuting the determination with a nonrefundable appeal fee of \$395. This appeal must be made within 30 days of the date of the notification letter. Appeals can be initiated by contacting [info@abdsm.org](mailto:info@abdsm.org). All appeals are carefully reviewed, and a final decision is made by the ABDSM board of directors.

## **Reapplication**

### **Not Achieving a Passing Exam Score**

Candidates who did not achieve a passing score on their first attempt are eligible to retake the examination during their eligibility period (three years following completion of the AADSM Mastery Program or an accredited version of the program).

### **Retaking the Examination**

Eligible candidates may apply to retake the examination in any exam window that falls within their eligibility period following their first failed attempt, up to a total of two retakes, by submitting the following during the application window:

- Application (submitted online at [www.abdsm.org](http://www.abdsm.org))
- Retake application fee of \$395
- Current dental license

Should the applicant fail to attain a passing score after a total of three attempts (initial attempt and two retakes), a new application and fee is required, regardless of the three year eligibility period.

### **If Not Eligible to Retake the Examination**

If the candidate is ineligible for an examination retake, a new application and fee must be submitted. In addition to any other requirements that may be in place at the time of the new application, the candidate must also submit documentation of 65 CE hours that have been completed within the 3 years prior to the application deadline, meet the CE requirements outlined in these guidelines, and have not previously been submitted. Retaking the AADSM Mastery Program in its entirety will satisfy the CE requirement.

### **Continuing Education Requirements for Reapplicants**

Candidates who reapply for certification outside their initial eligibility period (three years following completion of the AADSM Mastery Program or an accredited version of the program) must reestablish their eligibility by completing additional continuing education in dental sleep medicine.

Eligibility can be established by

- 1) Retaking the AADSM Mastery Program or an accredited version of the program; or
- 2) Completing 65 hours of continuing education that meet the following requirements:

The ABDSM accepts only ADA CERP recognized or AGD PACE approved continuing education credits in dental sleep medicine or sleep medicine provided by a non-profit organization or accredited universities. Up to ten (10) credits may be *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits<sup>TM</sup>* in sleep medicine. Candidates must be the participant of all submitted courses and not the instructor. Though candidates are encouraged to participate in AADSM educational opportunities, including the AADSM Annual Meeting, this is not a requirement. To confirm that a particular CE provider is a not-for-profit organization, visit GuideStar's website at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) and search for their listing. All IRS-registered non-profit organizations will be listed on GuideStar.

To receive credit for CE, the following documentation must be submitted for each course:

1. CE verification letter or certificate issued by the course provider. CE transcripts of any kind are not acceptable for verifying continuing education credits.
2. Educational objectives or a detailed agenda that clearly show that the course was science-based education in dental sleep medicine or sleep medicine. If a course includes a mixture of applicable and non-applicable topics, circle those credit hours that do apply.

To demonstrate that candidates are furthering their clinical knowledge of dental sleep medicine, practice management and billing credit hours are not accepted. Temporomandibular disorder credit hours are accepted toward the ABDSM requirement only when the course objectives clearly document a prominent dental sleep medicine focus.

Self-instructional and electronically mediated learning activities in dental sleep medicine that are either ADA CERP recognized or AGD PACE approved and provided by a non-profit organization or accredited university may count towards this requirement. A maximum of ten(10) credits from self-instructional or electronically mediated activities are acceptable.

### **International Certificant and Canadian Reapplicants**

All prerequisites and application requirements for applicants wishing to reapply outside of their three-year eligibility period shall apply to International Certificant and Canadian applicants with the following exceptions:

- CE credits must meet all requirements except they need not be ADA CERP recognized or AGD PACE approved.

## Professional Designation

The use of these designations in any form prior to notification by the ABDSM board of directors that all requirements have been successfully completed is strictly prohibited.

Upon notification by the ABDSM, individuals may use the following options to display their respective designation:

- Diplomate, American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine
- Diplomate, ABDSM
- D. ABDSM
- International Certificant, American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine
- International Certificant, ABDSM

In the context of a sentence, the following is permissible:

- Dr. (Name) is a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine
- Dr. (Name) is an International Certificant of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine

To protect themselves from action on the part of state licensing boards, Diplomates of the ABDSM must not use the following terms to describe their designation:

- Board-certified
- Certified
- Credentialed
- Certification

For information about state-specific advertising regulations, please refer to your state's dental practice act.

## Scope of the Designation

Diplomate status does not denote specialty status or specialty recognition. Furthermore, it does not confer or imply any legal qualification, licensure, or privilege in professional activities as they relate to oral appliance therapy or oral surgery for sleep disordered breathing. It signifies a professional commitment to education, knowledge and experience in dental sleep medicine. It recognizes those dentists duly licensed by law who have successfully completed the board certification requirements established by the ABDSM. Dental sleep medicine is not recognized as a specialty area by the American Dental Association.

## Maintenance of Certification

Diplomates and International Certificants of the ABDSM must meet maintenance of certification requirements to demonstrate current knowledge of dental sleep medicine and remain in good standing. Those who do not fulfill the following requirements may have their status suspended by the ABDSM until they come back into compliance with the requirements. Those with a suspended status are not listed in the public directories of the ABDSM or AADSM.



**1. Earn twenty-five (25) hours of CE credits in dental sleep medicine or sleep medicine every two (2) years.**

- A minimum of five (5) hours must be ADA CERP-recognized or AGD PACE-approved continuing education credits in dental sleep medicine provided by a non-profit organization, an accredited university, or a for-profit organization.
- A maximum of twenty (20) credits may be AMA PRA Category 1 CME credits in sleep medicine.
- A maximum of six (6) credit hours may be in practice management, billing, and coding for dental sleep medicine.
- The Diplomate must be a participant, not the instructor.
- Though Diplomates are encouraged to participate in AADSM educational opportunities, including the AADSM Annual Meeting, this is not a requirement.
- Self-instructional or electronically mediated activities are accepted.
- Temporomandibular disorder credit hours are accepted toward the ABDSM requirement when the course objectives clearly document a prominent dental sleep medicine focus.
- A maximum of thirteen (13) hours can be counted from credits earned by lecturing or authoring activities. *Note: the ABDSM does not issue CE hours for lecturing and authorship; instead, the hours from these activities will count towards the total required CE hours for Maintenance of Certification.* The following criteria must be met to use lecturing or authoring activities toward MOC requirements:
  - Lectures and Presentations
    - Each hour of lecture is accepted as equivalent to one CE credit.
    - The material must be presented within the two years prior to the current year and repeated presentations of the same material will not be accepted.
    - Only presentations on dental sleep medicine topics in ADA CERP or AGD PACE recognized programs will be accepted.
    - Submit a letter from the course sponsor or provider that verifies you as the presenter along with the date and title of the presentation.
  - Authoring Activities
    - Articles on dental sleep medicine topics published in peer-reviewed journals are accepted as equivalent to two CE credits.
    - Articles must be published within the two years prior to the current year.
    - Any of the article's authors may use the article to meet their maintenance of certification requirements.
    - Include a link to the article that verifies your role as author as well as the article's publication date.
    - Book chapters on dental sleep medicine topics are accepted as equivalent to four CE credits.
    - Books must be published within the two years prior to the current year.
    - Any of the chapter's authors or editors may use the chapter to meet their maintenance of certification requirements.
    - Include a link to the book that verifies your role as author or editor as well as the book's publication date.
- Proof of CE must be provided to the ABDSM upon request. To receive credit for CE, the following documentation must be submitted for each course:

1. CE verification letter or certificate issued by the course provider. CE transcripts of any kind are not acceptable for verifying continuing education credits.
2. Educational objectives or a detailed agenda that clearly show that the course was science-based education in dental sleep medicine or sleep medicine. If a course includes a mixture of applicable and non-applicable topics, circle those credit hours that do apply.

**2. Pay an annual administrative fee of \$200.**

- Invoices for this fee are mailed in January. The fee must be payable in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank.
- Federal Service Dentists serving in the US and Canada who verify their active-duty status pay a discounted fee of \$50.

### **Ethics**

The ABDSM expects all candidates, Diplomates and International Certificants to comply with the most recent *American Dental Association Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct*. Honor violations are taken seriously and may result in disqualification or retraction of the Diplomate designation. Once Diplomate status is revoked by the ABDSM, it will not be reinstated. Individuals wishing to reinstate their designation after revocation will need to reapply as new applicants.

### **Disclaimer**

These guidelines are not intended to supersede state dental practice acts. The ABDSM advises all dentists to contact the dental licensing board in their state to verify the approved scope of practice for their license and practice accordingly.

The ABDSM board is self-designated and does not confer recognized specialty status by any other certifying organization. Personal use of the ABDSM Diplomate and International Certificant designation shall be the responsibility of each individual. The ABDSM assumes no liability for how each individual displays their designation.

The ABDSM advises all Diplomates and International Certificants to follow the *American Dental Association Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct* when advertising their status. It is also strongly recommended that each individual consult their state or local regulatory agency and adhere to their requirements. Most state licensing agencies do NOT permit advertising the credential. The Diplomate designation should only be used if it does not conflict with each certificant's local regulations and code of ethics.

These guidelines and policies are subject to change without notice. The latest updates can be found at [www.abdsm.org](http://www.abdsm.org).

## About the ABDSM

The ABDSM began certifying dentists in dental sleep medicine in 2004. At that time, the certification program was governed by a committee of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine Board of Directors.

As interest in certification grew, the ABDSM was separately incorporated in 2006 and continues to operate as an independent certification body for the DSM field. The purpose of the ABDSM is to certify dentists who meet its requirements and maintain a list of those certified. Accordingly, the ABDSM maintains a public directory of all Diplomates and International Certificants who are currently in good standing at [www.ABDSM.org](http://www.ABDSM.org).

The ABDSM, as a certification board, maintains a close connection with AADSM, the leading membership organization for the DSM field. To support the field of dental sleep medicine, the AADSM has agreed to recognize those of its members who have earned Diplomate and International Certificant status. The Find-an-AADSM-Dentist directory identifies those AADSM members who have earned ABDSM certification and are currently in good standing with the ABDSM.

### ABDSM Board of Directors

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*Any correspondence to the members of the Board of Directors should be directed through the ABDSM National Office.*

### American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine

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