FEATURE

NATABOC Announces Change in Curriculum Route Requirements for 2002-2003

Russ Cagle, PhD, ATC, president of the National Athletic Trainers' Association Board of Certification, Inc.(NATABOC) announced that effective with the 2002-03 academic year, the NATABOC will no longer require athletic training experience hours for curriculum route candidates. The following article explains the Board of Certification's decision.

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Why will "hours" no longer be required?

The accreditation process by CAAHEP and the JRC-AT has established that all Athletic Training Education Competencies and Clinical Proficiencies must be instructed within all curriculums. As a result, the clinical experiences are established to create learning over time for a minimum of two academic years. The clinical experiences must be attached to academic courses with measurable outcomes. In essence, the change is from a quantitative experience to a qualitative experience. The NATABOC has determined that the successful completion of this process by a candidate for certification will assure that this candidate has met the requirements needed to sit for the examination in lieu of the "hours" requirement.

How will quality be maintained?

The accreditation process requires every curriculum to develop and implement a clinical instruction plan to ensure that all students enrolled meet the minimum competencies required. The curriculums undergo a rigorous self-study process verified by an on-site accreditation visit to confirm the standards for clinical education are being met. In addition, an annual report is required from the program to ensure ongoing compliance between the accreditation visits.

What about the hours being obtained by current students?

The 1999 Athletic Training Educational Competencies will be in effect for the 2002-03 academic year. Those students completing the accredited curriculum route and graduating before this date must complete the current 800-hour requirement. For those students graduating in 2003 and beyond, all requirements of the 1999 Competencies will be in effect. Any accrued "hours" will, in essence, be a part of the completed clinical experience.

Does this mean accredited curriculums will not require any measure of time for their clinical experiences?

The decision of how a curriculum program evaluates the clinical experience for academic credit is left up to the institution. Institutions may require a minimum and maximum number of weeks or time associated with the academic credit for the clinical courses. The accreditation process is concerned with the quality of the experiences and student outcomes and knowledge rather than the amount of hours accrued. Again, a minimum of two academic years of clinical experience is required for all students.

What about the internship route to certification?

The internship route to certification is not affected by this change. All internship candidates must continue to meet the 1,500 clinical hour requirement to be eligible for the NATABOC examination. As there is no educational accreditation process for the internship route that controls the candidate's clinical experience, the requirement to sit for the certification examination remains as an hour requirement for internship candidates. The expiration of this route to NATABOC certification examination eligibility – which occurs on Jan. 1, 2004 – will solve the difference fully as the accredited curriculum route will be the only means of eligibility for the examination.

What if our state requires "hours" as part of the state practice act?

While some states may require documentation of clinical hours, it is up to the curriculum program directors to inform their students of this requirement and the states involved. The program director should then devise a tracking system for their students to fill this need. Individuals in states that require "hours" would be encouraged to amend their practice acts, as feasible, for the acceptance of NATABOC certification or graduation from a CAAHEP accredited curriculum as eligibility for state credentials

So, the NATABOC certification examination will continue to be required to become a certified athletic trainer?

Yes. The elimination of the "hours" requirement for the accredited curriculum does not mean graduates will no longer be required to complete the examination to be a certified athletic trainer. The NATABOC certification exam remains the benchmark that protects the public by only certifying candidates who have adequately demonstrated their professional skills and knowledge through the successful completion of a valid and reliable examination.

Who can answer my questions as they arise?

Either the NATABOC for certification questions or the JRC-AT for accreditation matters. If you're not sure whom to contact, try the NATA Education Council who will route you to the appropriate individual.

NATABOC: (877) BOC-EXAM or staff@nataboc.org;

JRC-AT: (303) 627-6229 or lcaruthers@ast.org

Education Council: (617) 373-5795 or chadnataec@aol.com ■

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