



Frequently Asked Questions about the 2012 Exam Eligibility Requirements

Why did the IBLCE Board of Directors make these changes?

These changes are one of the approaches that the IBLCE Board is using to reach its strategic goal of increasing the value of IBCLC certification. Establishing general education requirements and standardising the required amount of education in human lactation and breastfeeding are ways in which IBLCE can assure the public, consumers, employers and policy-makers that individuals who hold the IBCLC credential are competent, safe practitioners.

Why was the requirement for education in human lactation and breastfeeding increased to 90 hours?

Currently, Pathways 1 and 3 require candidates to have 45 hours of education in human lactation and breastfeeding. However, Pathway 2 requires candidates to have 90 hours of lactation specific education. The amount of education required of Pathway 2—90 hours—is much more realistic and responsible. If you examine the IBLCE Exam Blueprint, you will see that it is very difficult to cover all these topics in 45 hours. So, this change was made not only to make the requirement consistent for all the pathways but to increase the likelihood that all exam candidates will have a comprehensive education in the subject matter that will be on the certification exam.

I've not been able to find a course that offers at least 90 hours of instruction in human lactation and breastfeeding. How can I complete this requirement?

There will be a transition period during which it may be difficult for prospective IBCLCs to find comprehensive courses that are at least 90 hours of instruction. IBLCE will be encouraging educators to expand their educational offerings to include courses of 90 hours or more, as well as promoting efforts to provide more distance and online learning opportunities. In the meantime, applicants may need to enroll in more than one education program.

I'm not a health professional and I have never studied some of the higher education subjects that are listed. Where can I get the coursework needed to meet the general higher education requirements?

The ability of those who are not health professionals to meet these requirements will vary from country to country. In some parts of the world, you may complete these courses by enrolling in local colleges or universities. In addition, many colleges and universities offer online and distance learning enrollment through which this education may be completed. Consult your local college or university and/or search the Internet for online and distance education in these subjects.

A number of years ago, I took courses in some of the required higher education subjects. Is there a time limit on this education?

Previously completed higher education in the required subjects may be used to meet the general education requirement. There is no time limit on this education. If you have already studied one or more of these subjects as part of your higher education, request a transcript from the school where you completed the coursework. This transcript will be needed as verification that you completed the required education.

What about the 6 additional topics such as medical terminology and universal safety precautions? Where can I get education in these topics?

Local colleges and universities may offer non-credit or continuing education in these subjects. Some of the topics are also offered through distance or online learning opportunities that can be found through an Internet search. In addition, IBLCE anticipates that educators will develop courses that are specifically designed to meet these new requirements. In the interim until these courses are more widely available, IBLCE recognises that meeting these requirements will be a challenge for some people. Nevertheless, the Board of Directors feels strongly that education in these topics is crucial to the purpose of certification—public safety and protection—and the value of the IBCLC credential in particular.

Why did the IBLCE Board decide to specify education in the 14 subjects listed?

The IBCLC credential is intended to designate someone who has the specialised knowledge and skills needed to provide competent lactation and breastfeeding care as part of the maternal-child health care team. In response to its commitment to public safety and protection, the IBLCE Board of Directors must take measures to ensure that exam candidates are prepared to function as respected and reliable members of the health care team. The 14 subjects specified are typical of the education required of health professionals such as nurses and midwives. Completion of education in these subjects positions exam candidates not only for success on the exam but also success in their practice as members of the health care team. These general education requirements increase the likelihood that policy-makers, employers, other health professionals and insurance companies will support licensure and reimbursement initiatives for IBCLCs.

These new requirements will make becoming an IBCLC even more expensive. Are the IBLCE Board members concerned that the new requirements will reduce the number of applicants who are eligible to become IBCLCs?

The new requirements may result in a decreased number of exam candidates in the short term. However, the reason for making these changes is to increase the value of IBCLC certification. The IBLCE vision for the IBCLC credential is to “increase the number and improve the quality of IBCLCs.” IBLCE is the global authority in lactation consultant certification and raising the educational standards for the lactation consultant profession is crucial to the future growth and value of the IBCLC credential. While there may be a short-term drop in the number of prospective IBCLCs, the increased value of the credential will make IBCLC certification more highly desired by not only first-time candidates but also by recertifying IBCLCs.

I've heard that IBLCE used to allow applicants to complete their lactation specific education up until the day before the exam. Why is that no longer possible?

In years past, the number of exam candidates was much smaller and there were fewer courses that offered appropriate pre-exam education. IBLCE must be fair to all candidates; allowing additional time to complete their lactation specific education could be construed as giving some candidates an advantage over others. In addition, as the profession has grown, there are more first-time candidates and more recertifying IBCLCs. The increasing number of candidates has made it more difficult for staff to manage applications with incomplete requirements. Incomplete applications require more attention and follow-up.

IBLCE anticipates that there will be a transition period during which first-time applicants may find it more difficult to complete their education in a timely manner. However, IBLCE is confident that educators will respond to the need for not only expanding course offerings but also the need to schedule courses so as to allow applicants to complete the exam eligibility requirements in a timely manner. In turn, IBLCE will be responding to scheduling needs by introducing online application and computer-based testing.

With these new requirements, it seems to me that IBLCE is discouraging those of us who are not health professionals from becoming IBCLCs. I know of several IBCLCs in my community who are not health professionals and they are well respected. Why has IBLCE placed so much focus on the new general education requirements?

IBLCE continues to support the long-standing practice of welcoming and encouraging the community-based practitioners, who may not be health professionals, to prepare and become IBCLCs. The ability to actively listen and take the time to collaborate with mothers in developing an appropriate care plan and the dedication to supporting families beyond the early postpartum period are some of the well-developed competencies of candidates who are not health professionals.

As the lactation profession has matured, it has become clear that it is necessary for all IBCLCs to be well-grounded in those subjects that are typically studied by health professionals. A strong foundation of knowledge in the health disciplines that are typically included in health profession curricula will position all IBCLCs to function as well-respected members of the maternal-child health team. In addition, employers and policy-makers will have increased confidence in the IBCLC credential. With this increased confidence in place, initiatives such as licensure, reimbursement and more jobs for IBCLCs are more likely to be successful.