

**Prospectus for the  
AMERICAN BOARD OF HEALTH PHYSICS**



Information regarding requirements for Certification, examination procedures and fees, and application materials are available on this website. Additional information is available from:

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# AMERICAN BOARD OF HEALTH PHYSICS

## History

Shortly after its organization, the Health Physics Society established a Committee to study the need for certification of health physicists and to develop plans for certification if this appeared to be desirable. After an intensive study, the Committee recommended that an American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) be established to develop standards and procedures, to examine candidates, and to issue proof of certification to individuals who have satisfied the requirements established by the Board. The Board of Directors of the Society decided that these recommendations had merit and appointed a temporary American Board of Health Physics on 8 November 1958.

The temporary ABHP developed a set of minimum requirements for certification after carefully reviewing the professional background of 100 selected individuals believed to be representative of those recognized as competent health physicists, and submitted them to the membership of the Society for comment. At the Annual Meeting of the Society in June 1959, the matter was discussed in an open meeting and there was general support for the plan. The Board of Directors of the Society formally established the ABHP as an independent organization by approving an amendment to the By-Laws of the Society on 29 October 1959.

The ABHP was incorporated in the State of New York in December 1960 as a non-profit educational body. The Board has eight members, with each member serving a five-year term.

A certification renewal program was established by the Board in 1977 to ensure the continued professional development of Certified Health Physicists (CHPs). In 1978 the Board offered a specialty certification in power reactor health physics which was discontinued in 1993.

In 1985, the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) was formed, and incorporated as a separate entity in 1988. The primary purpose of the Academy is to establish an organization which permits the direct input of Certified Health Physicists into the selection of Board members and to the ongoing program of the Board. In 1994, the corporate structures of the ABHP and the AAHP were consolidated under the AAHP.

## Purposes of the Board

The basic purposes of the ABHP are to:

1. Elevate the standards and advance the profession of health physics by encouraging its study and improving its practice
2. Encourage and insist on the highest standards of professional ethics and integrity in the practice of health physics
3. Determine the competence of professional health physicists and arrange, control, and conduct

investigations and examinations to evaluate the qualifications of voluntary candidates for certification by the Board

4. Grant and issue certificates in the field of health physics to qualified applicants and maintain a registry of holders of such certificates
5. Sponsor a Certification Renewal Program, including issuance of “recertified” seals to qualified ABHP diplomates who have demonstrated their continued professional involvement in health physics.

## **Meaning of Certification**

Certification indicates that the recipient has completed certain requirements of study and professional experience, which the Board considers to constitute an adequate foundation in health physics, and has passed an examination designed to test competence in this field. Holders of ABHP certification may identify themselves as either Certified Health Physicists (CHP) or Diplomates of the American Board of Health Physics (DABHP). It should be recognized that the certificate awarded by the Board is not a license and, therefore, does not confer a legal qualification to practice health physics.

## **Professional Responsibilities of Certified Health Physicists**

In achieving certification, the CHP recognizes and assumes the responsibilities due the profession of health physics. To uphold the professional integrity of health physics implied by certification, the relations of the CHP with other individuals and groups, including clients, colleagues, governmental agencies, and the general public, shall always be based upon and reflect the highest standards of professional ethics and integrity. Each CHP has a professional and ethical obligation to practice only in those areas in which he or she is competent. To maintain technical competence, the CHP has a commitment to remain professionally active in the field of health physics and knowledgeable of scientific, technical, and regulatory developments in the field.

# General Requirements for Certification

1. **Academics:** As a minimum, the applicant must submit evidence (for example, official college transcripts or certified translations of official transcripts directly from the educational institution(s)) of earning a bachelor's or graduate degree from an accredited college or university in physical science or engineering or in a biological science with a minimum of 20 semester hours in physical science. Except for applicants for early admission to Part I (see below), applicants shall have satisfied and documented all requirements for degrees claimed by the time application is made for either part of the examination.

Applicants for early admission to Part I who have not received their degree at the time of application, but who are scheduled to be granted their qualifying degree by 30 June, may sit for the examination by providing an official transcript showing current degree progress by the application deadline. However, an official transcript demonstrating that the qualifying degree was granted no later than 30 June of the year of the examination must be received by the Secretariat no later than 1 October. Should confirmatory transcripts not be received, the candidate's examination score will be voided and the candidate's examination fees will not be refunded

2. **Experience.** An applicant must have at least six years of responsible professional experience in health physics as of 1 July of the year in which the examination is to be taken. At least three years of the experience must have been in applied health physics. The six years of professional experience, which must be documented by an applicant for Part II of the examination, must be experience that demonstrates that the candidate has been required to exercise judgment in one, or more, of the following:

- establishment and/or evaluation of a radiation protection program
- design and/or the evaluation of the design of the radiation protection aspects of a facility
- design and implementation of a radiation protection training course or program
- development of an experimental and/or measurement program designed to answer questions related to radiation protection
- evaluation of measurement data
- analysis and solution of radiation protection problems
- preparation, interpretation and implementation of recommendations and regulations.

At the discretion of the Board, advanced degrees in health physics or a closely related area of study may be substituted for a maximum of two years of the required experience. A master's degree may be substituted for one year, while a doctoral degree may be substituted for two years of the required experience. *Technician-level experience will, in no case, be acceptable to meet the experience requirements for the Part II exam.*

With respect to military service, only commissioned officer and warrant officer grades can meet the Part II professional health physics experience.

An applicant may claim professional experience for an advanced degree and work experience for the same period, BUT, that candidate can only claim a maximum of one year of total experience in any single calendar year.

It is incumbent upon the applicant to demonstrate that he/she has met the criteria for professional experience stated above. Professional experience is generally considered to be acquired after earning a qualifying degree. However, the Board recognizes there may be cases where individuals

are working at a professional level prior to completing the requirements for a qualifying degree.

3. **References.** References are required from the applicant's supervisor and, if applying for Part II, from at least two other individuals who are professionally qualified to evaluate the applicant's ability in health physics. Your supervisor may not be used as a professional reference. With respect to your professional references, at least one of the two professional references, or your supervisor, must be certified by the ABHP, although at the discretion of the Board Chair, a professional reference, or your supervisor, certified by another, related, certifying board, may be acceptable. If you wish to have a professional reference certified by an alternative, but related, board, it is suggested that you first contact the Board Chair.

*Please note that immediate family members may be listed as the candidate's supervisor, but they may not be used as professional references.*

4. **Written Report.** Candidates applying for Part 2 of the ABHP exam are required to submit a written report demonstrating that they have produced *professional level* work in health physics. To meet this requirement, this professional report must address each of the following criteria: 1) It must be a report on a health physics topic, such as those included in the CHP exam, 2) The report must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of health physics, 3) The report also must demonstrate either: your ability to independently develop acceptable judgements in health physics and to apply appropriate decision making based on those judgements, your ability to independently develop an acceptable health physics program and to apply the appropriate knowledge and decision making to properly enact that program, or your ability to design a health physics project and collect and analyze its relevant data (including appropriate statistical analyses) and determine if the project's goal or hypothesis is met. The report lastly must be performed and written solely or principally by the candidate.

Your submitted Radiation protection reports must be unclassified and approved for public release; it may be redacted, if necessary, to achieve this.

After examining these application materials and if there is enough time before the submittal deadline, the Board may request an additional report, if the submitted report was judged to not meet these criteria. All reports will be treated as confidential material. All reports submitted in fulfillment of this requirement shall be reviewed by an ABHP member. Third-party review of written reports is typically not acceptable, but may be under extraordinary circumstances. The Chair, and other board members as appointed by the chair, shall make determinations in this regard.

5. **Examination.** The examination has two parts. The first is the Part I exam, which can be taken prior to fulfilling all the requirements for certification and is designed to determine the competence of the applicant in fundamental aspects of health physics. The Part I exam is a three-hour exam that is held at multiple national testing centers. These Part I testing centers will provide a calculator program on the testing center computer. As such, candidates may not bring their own calculators to Part I.

The Part II exam is the second certification exam and is designed to evaluate the applicant's professional competence in applied health physics topics. This exam is held over 6 hours and calculators may be used during the Part II exam. No recording or transmitting devices are permitted, and all calculators with "constant" memories must be demonstrated to contain no stored constants (other than pi or e) or stored programs.

For candidates with ADA accommodations, the Part II exam will be split over 2 days. The first day will be the Core exam with a time limit of 2.5 hrs. times the candidate's accommodation factor. The

second day is the Specialty exam, with a time limit of 3.5 hrs. times the candidate's accommodation factor.

Either part of the examination must be taken during the calendar year of notification of eligibility, or a new application must be submitted. After passing one Part of the examination, the applicant must pass the other part within a period of seven years, or retake both parts. For example, a candidate passing one Part of the examination in 2020 must pass the second part of the examination no later than 2027.

Anyone who meets the education and experience requirements and is practicing health physics in a competent and ethical manner is strongly urged to apply to the Board for admission to the examination. Although satisfactory performance on the examination is not the only requirement for certification, persons who are admitted to and who perform well on the examination usually receive certification by the Board.

## **Early Admission to Part I of the Written Examination**

The purpose of early admission to Part I of the examination is twofold: (1) to give recent graduates an opportunity to demonstrate competence in the fundamentals of health physics at the beginning of their careers, and (2) to encourage younger health physicists to proceed toward certification.

Applicants are admitted to Part I of the examination if they (1) have fulfilled the academic requirements for the master's degree in health physics or a closely related field by 30 June of the year in which the examination is to be taken, (2) have received a bachelor's degree in health physics by 15 January of the year in which the examination is to be taken and have one year of applied professional experience, or (3) have another acceptable bachelor's degree and two years of professional experience at the time of examination.

Part I of the examination is constructed to test the knowledge of the fundamental aspects of health physics that is expected of any candidate who meets the qualifications for early admission to Part I. Questions in Part I address fundamental knowledge associated with applied health physics. Academic preparation alone may not be adequate to answer these questions. However, the presence of these questions should not prevent a well-prepared candidate with no practical experience from successfully completing Part I of the Certification examination.

## **Application and Fees**

To be eligible to sit for examination, candidates must submit an Application for Certification, original college transcripts, one Immediate Supervisor form, two Confidential Professional Reference forms, and a Radiation Protection Report and cover sheet. Candidates applying for only Part I do not need to submit a written report and the two Confidential Professional Reference forms.

The Application for Certification process is web-based and can be found at <https://app.prolydian.com/organizations/abhp>. Even though applications are completed online, original college transcripts must be mailed to the Secretariat and postmarked by January 15. All applicants are expected to use the web-based application process. Limited exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis; contact the Executive Director for further information.

Applications are only valid for one year. Thereafter, a new application, including reference and report forms, must be submitted. Application and examination fees are as follows:

Application Fee (for each application part)	Part I	\$100.00
	Part II 2023	\$200.00
	Part II 2024	\$250.00
Examination Fee (for each examination part to be taken; due upon approval of application)	Part I	\$150.00
	Part II 2023	\$400.00
	Part II 2024	\$500.00

Fees are non-refundable and examinations must be taken within one year of submitting fees.

The site examination fee for the Part I exam is not included.

**NOTE:** Re-examination fees following failure of the examination will be in accordance with the fee schedule in effect at the time reapplication is made.

## Final Action of the Board on Application for Certification

The final action of the Board regarding application for Certification is based on its evaluation of the total professional record of the applicant, i.e., education and experience, the achievements attained in health physics and related fields, maturity of judgment, the ethical nature of his or her professional conduct as indicated by associates and peers, and the examination. Any applicant denied certification may appeal the action of the Board by contacting the Executive Director within six months of notification of results.

## Examinations

Part I examinations are available at testing centers world-wide prior to the Annual Meeting of the Health Physics Society. Part I candidates will be sent information early in the calendar year to schedule an appointment at a convenient location.

Part II examinations are conducted at the location of the Society's meeting and may also be given at other



selected locations if demand warrants. All approved Part II candidates will be sent a site selection survey form in early April listing the tentative examination sites. Part II candidates should indicate their first and second choices of location and will be assigned to their first choice unless that site does not have enough candidates to warrant the examination being given at that location. All Part II candidates will be notified of their definite examination site approximately 45 days prior to the examination date and will be given an admission slip to the examination room. No reference material may be brought into the room for either part of the examination.

## **Re-Examinations and Postponements**

A candidate who fails the first examination may be admitted to a second examination after paying the examination fee. However, any candidates who fails to receive a minimum of 300 points weighted (out of 700 available points) on the Part II examination will have to wait one year before being allowed to sit again for the Part II examination. This requirement does not apply to candidates in their sixth and final year of eligibility since passing the Part I examination.

In addition, if a candidate passes one part of the examination, the candidate must pass the other part within a period of seven years, or must reapply and retake both parts. The candidate must notify the Board of his or her intention to retake the examination and submit the proper fee no later than January 15 of the year in which the examination is to be taken. If a candidate fails either part of the examination for the second time, a new application must be filed.

Lastly, if a candidate elects not to take any part of the examination in any given year, but subsequently elects to take the examination in any following year, the candidate must notify the Board of his or her intention to take the examination no later than January 15 of the year in which the examination is to be taken. Notification must be accompanied by the appropriate fee and, if required, a new application.

## **Revocation of Certificate**

Certificates may be revoked for actions considered by the Board to be in violation of the statement "Standards of Professional Responsibility for CHPs." Any person for whom such action is contemplated shall have the right of appearance before the Board.

## **Certification Renewal**

A Certification Renewal Program is sponsored by the Board in an effort to ensure that CHPs are fulfilling their professional responsibilities and to encourage continued professional development. To remain on the list of active CHPs, diplomats must renew their certification every four years. The requirements for continued active certification are: (1) to be engaged substantially and currently in professional health physics practice and/or the management of those in professional health physics; (2)

to have earned during the preceding four-year period sufficient continuing education credits by participation in approved courses, meetings, and other activities; and (3) to have met such other requirements, including payment of fees or assessments, as may generally be imposed. The Continuing Education Committee of the AAHP reviews courses in advanced health physics and related subjects that are submitted to it by the course organizers, or by a CHP who attended the course, and determines the number of continuing education credits to be awarded to participants.

## **Changes in Requirements**

Current requirements, procedures, and fees of the ABHP are described in this brochure. These are subject to change without notice; however, changes will be published before their effective date whenever practical. No changes will be retroactive.

## **Administration**

The ABHP retains the services of an Executive Director who maintains the national ABHP office. The Executive Director performs administrative functions including normal correspondence, accounting, bookkeeping, financial reporting, recordkeeping, and application processing for examinations and Certification Renewals.

Current Officers, Board Members and Panel Members are listed on the website of the American Board of Health Physics. This site ([www.aahp-abhp.org](http://www.aahp-abhp.org)) has additional information including an examination preparation guide.