

Joint Statement from the NBRC and CoARC Regarding Changes to NBRC Admissions Policies and CoARC Policy 13

The National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) and the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) recently took actions relating to the Special Certificate of Completion that will affect the eligibility of some respiratory therapy students attempting the new Therapist Multiple Choice (TMC) Examination beginning in January of 2015.

In 2001, the CoARC implemented what is now referred to as Policy 13- Special Certificate of Completion for CRT/RRT Eligibility:

“Accredited baccalaureate degree programs or higher offered as the Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice degree may grant specific certificate(s) of completion allowing students to apply for the CRT and/or RRT Practitioner credentialing exams after completion of science, general academic and respiratory care coursework commensurate with the requirements for an associate degree in their state/region.” (ACCREDITATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL Policies Approved November 9, 2013 Policies in Effect as of January 1, 2014 Published By: The Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care Copied from Website on December 18, 2013).

In response to this CoARC policy, the NBRC amended admission requirements for the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) Examination. The following was added to the options by which a person could become eligible for the CRT examination:

“Applicants enrolled in an accredited respiratory therapy program in an institution offering a baccalaureate degree may be admitted to the CRT Examination with a “special certificate of completion” issued by a sponsoring educational institution. The CoARC will authorize such institutions to issue the “special certificate of completion” at the advanced level following completion of the science, general academic and respiratory therapy coursework commensurate with the requirements for accreditation” (NBRC Candidate Handbook Copied from Website on December 18, 2013).

The sole intent of Policy 13 was to allow baccalaureate and graduate degree programs the option of awarding a certificate to their students once all associate degree requirements were met. The certificate would give these students an alternate mechanism to enter the NBRC credentialing system and subsequently, the workforce. In the eleven years since the implementation of that policy, there have been significant changes in the education processes of baccalaureate and graduate level respiratory therapy programs, as well as an unintended evolution in how Policy 13 was used by both programs and students.

For instance, some students have received a Special Certificate of Completion, earned the CRT and/or Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential and then failed to complete their educational program and never graduated. These individuals were, in some cases, able to obtain a state license, as many states use the NBRC credential as ‘proof’ that the applicant has completed an approved respiratory therapy training program. Another unintended consequence is that some advanced degree programs require their students to obtain the CRT Joint Statement from the NBRC and CoARC Regarding Changes to NBRC Admissions Policies and CoARC Policy 13 or RRT credential as a graduation requirement. The NBRC examinations are neither designed nor appropriate for use as a graduation requirement.

In addition, there are significant challenges for accredited programs to correctly report, and for CoARC and NBRC to accurately evaluate, information about these students because the date associated with their examination eligibility and/or success is not their graduation date, but some arbitrary date on which the Certificate was awarded or the student passed the exam.

Both the NBRC and the CoARC have been concerned about egregious unintended consequences, and each organization has reviewed all sides of Policy 13, and after due consideration, the two organizations have independently taken the following actions.

1. The NBRC Board voted to eliminate the Special Certificate of Completion as a route to the Therapist Multiple Choice Examination beginning January 1, 2015.

The Admissions policies for the new TMC Examination are:

- a. Applicants shall be 18 years of age or older.
- b. Applicants shall satisfy one of the following requirements:
 - 1) Applicants shall be a graduate and have a minimum of an associate degree (issued by a sponsoring educational institution) from a respiratory therapy education program
 - a) supported or accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) or
 - b) accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and graduated on or before November 11, 2009.
 - 2) Applicants shall hold the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT) RRT credential.
2. Based on the changes to the NBRC admissions policies and discussions with the NBRC, the CoARC Board held a special meeting in late December to discuss Policy 13. As a result of this meeting, the CoARC Board voted to rescind Policy 13 effective January 1, 2015. This policy change will be published in the next revision of the CoARC Policy and Procedures Manual due in December 2014.

Students awarded the Special Certificate of Completion may apply for the CRT examination and attempt the test until December 31, 2014.

For questions or comments regarding the NBRC's changes to its admissions policies, please contact Gary Smith, Executive Director, at gsmith@nbc.org.

For questions or comments regarding the CoARC's changes to Policy 13, please contact Tom Smalling, Executive Director, at tom@coarc.com.