

IBLCE Exam Facts & Figures

- The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) is an international certification board with over 28,100 certificants in 102 countries.
- A governing body with representation from relevant stakeholders is charged with oversight of the IBLCE certification program.
- IBLCE was established in 1985, and the IBLCE certification examination has been administered in 21 languages and in more than 50 countries.
- In 2012 alone, the IBLCE certification examination was administered in 17 languages and in 353 locations across 55 countries and territories.
- The IBLCE certification program holds the prestigious National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accreditation, which is a mark of quality for certification programs.
- IBLCE has held this prestigious accreditation since 1988.
- To earn NCCA accreditation, a certification program must meet defined and objective standards pertaining to numerous aspects of its program, including with respect to its examination.
- Following typical professional certification examination processes, the IBLCE examination is based on data from a practice analysis (sometimes referred to as a job analysis or role delineation study) which is a survey of professionals in the field.
- Relying on the data from the practice analysis, a content outline or test blueprint was created. The IBLCE content outline has two dimensions: scientific disciplines (examples: “Maternal and Infant Anatomy”, “Growth Parameters and Developmental Milestones”) and chronological periods. To view the complete blueprint.
- Specific test questions are written by subject matter experts and are based on the content outline and scientific literature and/or standard references in the field.
- The assessment process evaluates mastery of targeted knowledge.
- The exam is administered in a secure, proctored environment.
- Certification is recognition that an individual has met eligibility requirements and has passed a rigorous exam that assesses knowledge in breastfeeding management.
- The assessment instruments are developed using accepted psychometric principles.
- Cut scores (pass/fail criteria) are established using standard psychometric procedures that involve expert judgment about the level of performance expected of an IBCLC.

Preparing for IBCLC Certification

As you think about a career as a lactation consultant, it is important that you keep in mind that an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®) is a professional member of the healthcare team. As such, a candidate for the IBLCE certification examination must have higher education in the health sciences, clinical practice in lactation and breastfeeding care and education in human lactation and breastfeeding.

Many IBCLCs are educated as clinical health professionals in other fields such as nursing, dietetics, midwifery and medicine. If you are not already educated in one of the clinical health professions listed on the Recognised Health Professions List, you may wish to explore this option.

Individuals who are educated in one of the Recognised Health Professions have already completed the Health Sciences Education required of IBLCE examination candidates. These individuals are likely to be able to use their paid or volunteer experience in providing care to breastfeeding families to meet the clinical practice hours required of IBLCE examination candidates.

The use of paid or volunteer experience in providing care to breastfeeding families as a Recognised Health Professional is the way many candidates meet the clinical practice prerequisite for the IBLCE certification examination. The other way to use paid or volunteer experience for meeting the clinical practice requirement is to obtain experience through service for a

Let's take a look at two scenarios and discuss how an individual in these situations might proceed toward their goal of becoming an IBCLC. The following documents will be referenced in these scenarios and you may find it helpful to have them available as you read.

Recognised Health Professions List
Recognised Mother Support Counsellor Organisations
Health Sciences Education Guide
Health Sciences Summary

Scenario 1: I am educated in one of the Recognised Health Professions. As a Recognised Health Professional, you have already completed the Health Sciences Education. It does not matter when you completed this education. When you apply for the IBLCE exam, you should be prepared to provide a copy of your license, registration, degree, diploma or transcript as proof of your education as a Recognised Health Professional. In the past five years, have you worked or volunteered in a capacity in which you provided lactation and breastfeeding care?

- If you can answer “Yes” to this question, you will most likely be able to follow Pathway 1 to qualify for the IBLCE exam.
- Pathway 1 requires 1000 hours of clinical practice in lactation and breastfeeding care that was obtained within the 5 years immediately prior to applying for the exam.
- In addition, you will need to complete 90 hours of education in human lactation and breastfeeding within the 5 years immediately prior to applying for the IBLCE exam.

- If your answer is “No,” you may wish to consider work or volunteer options in which you could obtain the required 1000 hours of clinical practice experience in lactation and breastfeeding care that would allow you to qualify through Pathway 1. Otherwise, you may wish to consider Pathway 2 or Pathway 3.
- Pathway 2 requires completion of an academic program in lactation that includes the clinical practice hours and lactation education required to qualify for the IBLCE exam.
- Pathway 3 requires that you contract with one or more IBCLCs to obtain the required directly supervised clinical practice hours and, in addition, you must obtain 90 hours of lactation specific education. Pathway 3 plans **MUST** be verified by IBLCE before the clinical hours can count toward IBLCE requirements.

Scenario 2: I am not educated in one of the Recognised Health Professions. As someone who is not a Recognised Health Professional, you will need to complete the 14 Health Science courses required of IBLCE examination candidates. You should review the Health Sciences Education Guide and determine whether or not you have completed these courses. When you apply for the IBLCE examination, you must be prepared to provide transcripts that demonstrate completion of a higher education course in each of the 14 subjects; each course must meet the requirements outlined in the Health Sciences Education Guide. In some parts of the world, enrollment in a course of study that would educate you in one of the Recognised Health Professions is the most direct way to meet the Health Sciences Education requirement. In other parts of the world, the higher education systems will allow you to enroll in individual Health Science Education courses without the requirement of declaring the intention to become a Recognised Health Professional. Obtaining the required clinical practice hours in lactation and breastfeeding care should be your next consideration. Some individuals obtain their clinical practice hours by working or volunteering for a Recognised Mother Support Counsellor Organization and following Pathway 1, which requires 1000 hours of clinical practice in lactation and breastfeeding care. Others choose to follow Pathway 2 or Pathway 3.

- Pathway 2 requires completion of an academic program in lactation that includes the clinical practice hours and lactation education required to qualify for the IBLCE exam.
- Pathway 3 requires that you contract with one or more IBCLCs to obtain the required directly supervised clinical practice hours and, in addition, you must obtain 90 hours of lactation specific education. Pathway 3 plans **MUST** be verified by IBLCE before the clinical hours can count toward IBLCE requirements.

You probably still have questions about the specifics of the examination eligibility requirements. Please review the information found on the Eligibility Criteria page of this website for more detail. In addition, this section of the website includes information about the Pathways you can follow to qualify for the IBLCE examination and Frequently Asked Questions about the IBLCE certification process. Answers to many of your questions can be found on these pages. Thank you for continuing to explore our website for answers.

Continuing Education Recognition Points

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE®) does not develop or offer education; however it does review educational activities submitted by providers and recognise those that are suitable as continuing education for the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®). CERP is the acronym for Continuing Education Recognition Point and is the professional education unit given to educational activities that are appropriate continuing education for IBCLCs.

There are three (3) types of CERPs:

- Programs with instruction specific to lactation are recognised with L-CERPs.
- Educational activities about the ethics of practice for IBCLCs are recognised with E-CERPs.
- Professional education that is related to the work of an IBCLC, but is not specifically about breastfeeding or ethics, is recognised with R-CERPs.

One (1) CERP is equivalent to sixty (60) minutes of instructional time. Continuing education units awarded by other health professional review boards are not necessarily calculated on the same basis as CERPs, so the numbers may not necessarily be interchangeable. If education has not already been recognised for CERPs, use the Individual CERPs Guide for guidance.

L-CERPs

L (lactation) CERPs can be earned from educational sessions, programs or materials where the primary focus or learning objective is lactation or breastfeeding specific, or addresses the role of the IBCLC.

The content should be:

- at a level appropriate for an IBCLC
- based on current research and scientific principles
- within the scope of practice of an IBCLC if addressing clinical practice

Examples of appropriate L-CERPs topics include:

- Breast anatomy in relation to lactation
- Clinical skills for IBCLCs
- Clinical documentation for IBCLCs
- Influence of culture on breastfeeding
- The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding
- Breastfeeding management
- Breastfeeding research
- Nutrition during lactation

IBCLCs recertifying by CERPs must demonstrate that they have accumulated at least 50 L-CERPs in the 5 years since they last passed the exam.

E-CERPs

Category E (ethics) CERPs can be earned from educational sessions, programs or materials that address professional ethics or standards, or ethical issues relevant to IBCLCs.

Examples of appropriate E-CERPs topics include:

- Practice ethics for lactation consultants
- Informed consent
- Health workers and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes
- Conflict of interest
- Knowing your limits; when to refer

- Human rights and infant feeding choice
- Dealing with a colleague whose practice is not based on scientific principles and up-to-date information
- Copyright and intellectual property

IBCLCs recertifying by CERPs are required to obtain at least 5 CERPs in the 5 years since they last passed the exam.

R-CERPs

Category R (related) CERPs can be earned from educational sessions, programs or materials where the primary focus or learning objective is directly related to the knowledge, skills or professional development of an IBCLC, but is not lactation, breastfeeding or ethics specific.

Examples of appropriate R-CERPs topics include:

- General anatomy
- Infant growth and development
- Research methods and statistics
- Cultural differences in health practices
- Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- Postpartum depression
- Counseling or communications skills
- Adult education principles
- Family dynamics
- Infant Massage Practices
- Nutrition (if not lactation-specific)
- Complementary therapies (overview sessions only)

IBCLCs recertifying by CERPs are not required to earn R-CERPs, but may use up to 20 R-CERPs to complete recertification requirements.

Restrictions

Educational programs based on topics not included on the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline are not eligible for CERPs. Examples of topics that will not be recognised for CERPs include:

- Computer skills
- Business management
- Bra fitting (unless specifically related to lactation)
- Motivational sessions
- Instructional programs on complementary therapies
- Specialized health care skills (e.g. fetal monitoring)

In addition, CERPs will **not** be awarded to the following types of education:

- clinical work as a lactation consultant
- antenatal or postnatal classes for mothers
- private study, including reading journals and watching videos
- programs organized by individuals or companies that manufacture, market or distribute products that are in any way related to breastfeeding and/or infant and young child feeding, nutrition and care, including products within the scope of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (e.g. infant formula, bottles or teats) or programs where

these company or company personnel had input into the choice of speakers or the content of the presentations

- sessions conducted by a person who has had his or her certification suspended or revoked by the IBLCE Ethics and Discipline Committee for the period of suspension or revocation



Scope of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) Certificants

International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®) certificants have demonstrated specialized knowledge and clinical expertise in breastfeeding and human lactation and are certified by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE®).

This Scope of Practice encompasses the activities for which IBCLC certificants are educated and in which they are authorised to engage. The aim of this Scope of Practice is to protect the public by promoting that all IBCLC certificants provide safe, competent and evidence-based care. As this is an international credential, this Scope of Practice is applicable in any country or setting where IBCLC certificants practice.

IBCLC certificants have the duty to uphold the standards of the IBCLC profession by:

- working within the framework defined by the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct and the Clinical Competencies for IBCLC Practice
- integrating knowledge and evidence when providing care for breastfeeding families from the disciplines defined in the IBLCE Exam Blueprint
- working within the legal framework of the respective geopolitical regions or settings
- maintaining knowledge and skills through regular continuing education

IBCLC certificants have the duty to protect, promote and support breastfeeding by:

- educating women, families, health professionals and the community about breastfeeding and human lactation
- facilitating the development of policies which protect, promote and support breastfeeding
- acting as an advocate for breastfeeding as the child-feeding norm
- providing holistic, evidence-based breastfeeding support and care, from preconception to weaning, for women and their families
- using principles of adult education when teaching clients, health care providers and others in the community

IBCLC certificants have the duty to provide competent services for mothers and families by:

- performing comprehensive maternal, child and feeding assessments related to lactation
- developing and implementing an individualized feeding plan in consultation with the mother
- providing evidence-based information regarding a mother's use, during lactation, of medications (over-the-counter and prescription), alcohol, tobacco and street drugs, and their potential impact on milk production and child safety
- providing evidence-based information regarding complementary therapies during lactation and their impact on a mother's milk production and the effect on her child
- integrating cultural, psychosocial and nutritional aspects of breastfeeding
- providing support and encouragement to enable mothers to successfully meet their breastfeeding goals
- using effective counselling skills when interacting with clients and other health care providers
- using the principles of family-centered care while maintaining a collaborative, supportive relationship with clients

IBCLC certificants have the duty to report truthfully and fully to the mother and/or infant's primary health care provider and to the health care system by:

- recording all relevant information concerning care provided and, where appropriate, retaining records for the time specified by the local jurisdiction

IBCLC certificants have the duty to preserve client confidence by:

- respecting the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of mothers and families

IBCLC certificants have the duty to act with reasonable diligence by:

- assisting families with decisions regarding the feeding of children by providing information that is evidence-based and free of conflict of interest
- providing follow-up services as required
- making necessary referrals to other health care providers and community support resources when necessary
- functioning and contributing as a member of the health care team to deliver coordinated services to women and families
- working collaboratively and interdependently with other members of the health care team
- reporting to IBLCE if they have been found guilty of any offence under the criminal code of their country or jurisdiction in which they work or is sanctioned by another profession
- reporting to IBLCE any other IBCLC who is functioning outside this Scope of Practice