

BOARD CERTIFICATION OVERVIEW

The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) is a nationally accredited credentialing organization formed to set higher standards for those who practice therapeutic massage and bodywork. It does this through a nationally recognized certification program—Board Certification. Board Certification represents the highest attainable credential within the profession; it is an advanced credential separate from entry-level massage therapy state licensure.

NCBTMB offers one examination for certification, the Board Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (BCETMB). NCBTMB has included a content outline for the BCETMB within this handbook. The eligibility criteria for Board Certification can be found in the section titled, “Eligibility Requirements,” of this handbook. Please review these criteria carefully before submitting your application to test.

Once you have become Board Certified, you will join thousands of other massage and bodywork professionals who are committed to fostering higher standards of ethical and professional practice in the delivery of therapeutic massage and bodywork services.

NCBTMB contracts with Prometric, an independent testing company, to administer the Board Certification Examination. Experts at Prometric work closely with NCBTMB to develop the exam that is used to evaluate the knowledge of therapeutic massage and bodywork professionals.

Prometric also scores the exam and sends the results to NCBTMB. NCBTMB oversees Prometric’s activities to assure that all components of the examination process meet national standards.

GENERAL EXAM INFORMATION

The Board Certification exam is a certification examination that candidates can take and pass to show they have earned a higher voluntary credential within the profession.

Exam Facts

- The Board Certification exam consists of 140 multiple-choice questions.
- Four choices are provided for each multiple-choice question. Only one choice is the correct answer.
- You will have 140 minutes (2.3 hours) to complete the certification exam.
- A computer scores the exam as either pass or fail.
- You will receive on-screen notification of having either passed or failed the exam as soon as you have completed it.

NCBTMB has resources to assist you in preparing for the exam. You can check out these resources in our [Important Links & Resources section](#).

EXAM MAKE-UP

Massage Modalities, Techniques, And Manual Forces (20%)

Knowledge

- General massage protocols
- Compression
- Tension/decompression
- Friction/shearing
- Bending
- PNF, MFR, pin and stretch, etc.

- Torsion
- Range of motion
- Muscle Energy Techniques
- Stretching
- Hydrotherapy
- Indications and contraindications
- Vibration (jostling, shaking)
- Tapotement
- Client/patient positioning
- Special population (pregnancy massage, oncology massage, etc.)
- Appropriate tools and appropriate use
- Efficient body mechanics
- Benefits and effects of modalities (forms), and techniques
- Modality literacy

Skills

- Determine applicable massage techniques when working with clients
- Apply massage techniques safely
- Perform massage on special populations (athletes, geriatric, prenatal, etc.)
- Identify contraindications and apply affective techniques
- Identify fundamental characteristics of bodywork modalities
- Perform proper body mechanics while working with different populations
- Position clients for comfort and safety

Applied Science: Anatomy, Physiology, Kinesiology, Pathology/ Injury, and Pharmacology (25%)

Knowledge

- Anatomy (structure of the human body including joints, tissues, muscles, functions, origins, insertions, and actions, nerve structure, etc.)
- Physiology – systems of the body with:
 - in-depth knowledge in muscle, skeletal, and nervous systems
 - intermediate knowledge in integumentary, cardiovascular, lymphatic and digestive systems
 - basic knowledge in respiratory, endocrine, reproductive and urinary systems
- Kinesiology (mechanics of body movement including levers, agonists, antagonists, synergist, etc.)
- Pharmacology (contraindications of prescription and non-prescription medication, implications for massage, etc.)
- Standard precautions
- Endangerment sites

Skills

- Identify structures and functions of all body systems
- Identify muscle and joint physiology
- Recognize mechanics of body movement – agonists, antagonists and synergists
- Identify and apply range of motion techniques – passive, active, active assisted and resistive range of motion
- Identify endangerment/cautionary sites
- Recognize muscle and orthopedic testing
- Identify indications and contraindications of common prescription drugs
- Determine proper stretching techniques and “end feels”

Professional Communication (15%)

Knowledge

- Medical terminology
- How to communicate with client/patient in understandable terms
- Reporting formats (appropriate language in medical history, treatment plan, SOAP notes, EMR etc.)
- HIPAA
- Communication with clients/patients (asking questions to clarify information)
- Client/patient sensitivity and vulnerabilities (how to make clients comfortable during treatment)
- Verbal and non-verbal cues
- Informed consent

Skills

- Effectively communicate with clients when explaining treatment plans
- Describe techniques, anatomy, physiology and kinesiology in understandable terms
- Identify HIPAA procedures
- Work within client comfort levels
- Adapt to verbal and non-verbal cues when working with clients
- Document sessions appropriate to the work setting – SOAP, EMR, spa etc.
- Uphold all HIPAA confidentiality standards
- Effectively communicate in proper medical terminology when working with other healthcare professionals

Professionalism & Ethics (10%)

Knowledge

- Current standard of care for safe and effective massage
- Professional boundaries
- Draping laws and techniques
- When to refer clients to other health professionals
- When, why and how to refuse treatment
- How to report misconduct and who to report to
- Transference and countertransference

Skills

- Maintain proper physical and emotional boundaries
- Respect client's right to say no
- Identify when to refer out and whom to refer clients with pathologies
- Identify transference and countertransference situations
- Identify when to refuse to treat clients
- Identify correct entities to report client or fellow massage therapist's misconduct

Laws & Business Practices (5%)

Knowledge

- Appropriate draping
- Continuing education requirements
- Scope of practice and applicable licensing laws
- Record keeping (business and client/patient)

Skills

- Maintain client confidentiality
- Perform only within the massage therapy scope of practice
- Maintain appropriate draping for client protection and privacy
- Represent educational and professional qualifications honestly
- Demonstrate proper business and client record keeping
- Abide by national organizations' code of conduct and policies
- Comply with all federal state and local laws

Assessment (25%)

Knowledge

- Comprehensive intake
- Interview and data collection techniques
- Observation techniques (posture deviation, etc.)
- Range of motion (normal and abnormal body motions)
- Treatment session planning techniques in collaboration with client/patient and other healthcare professionals when necessary
- Indications and contraindications
- Functional assessments and reassessments
- Customized treatments
- Pain scale and pain management
- Medical terminology (SOAP charting, etc.)
- Clinical reasoning (analyzing information from client/patient)
- Research associated with massage therapy

Skills

- Conduct an effective and thorough intake interview to gather information
- Interpret client health history information
- Customize treatment plans to fit the needs of each client
- Discuss treatment plan and alternate plans if requested by the client
- Determine common pain scale descriptions
- Utilize palpatory skills to assess soft tissue
- Perform and interpret active and passive range of motion assessments
- Perform and interpret postural analysis
- Perform and interpret gait assessment
- Perform and interpret manual resistance tests
- Perform and interpret special orthopedic tests
- Reassess client movement, strength and range of motion post – treatment
- Document all findings properly pre and post treatment and change treatment plans accordingly
- Collaborate with other healthcare professionals as needed
- Communicate using appropriate medical terminology when speaking with other medical professionals and in official documentation
- Work effectively as part of an integrated healthcare team
- Recognize and analyze research
- Identify different areas of research