Endocrine Certification in Neck Ultrasound (ECNU) Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the ECNU Program?
ECNU stands for Endocrine Certification in Neck Ultrasound.

Endocrine Certification in Neck Ultrasound (ECNU) is a professional certification in the field of neck ultrasonography for physicians who perform consultations and diagnostic evaluations for thyroid and parathyroid disorders through both diagnostic ultrasound and ultrasound-guided fine needle aspiration (UGFNA). The ECNU credential signifies that an individual has passed the Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE) and successfully completed the Validation of Competency Process (VCP). Successful candidates can use the ECNU designation after their names.

Why is it important that I participate in the ECNU Program?
ECNU is recognized by the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM), one of the preeminent, national accreditation bodies for ultrasound practices, and allows those with the ECNU credential to be directors of ultrasound laboratories and apply for AIUM Practice Accreditation. Also, it is expected that achieving ECNU certification will become increasingly important in the future for reimbursement from Medicare and third party payors.

Who is eligible to participate in the ECNU Program?
The ECNU Program is open to both AACE and non-AACE members. The ACE Neck Ultrasound Certification Council has established the eligibility criteria to qualify for the ECNU Program. Candidates applying for the ECNU Program may qualify through one (1) of the seven (7) routes outlined below, and must satisfy all requirements for the chosen route in order to be eligible for ECNU.

ROUTE 1: Endocrinologists with formal training in the subspecialty of endocrinology with attainment of board eligibility/board certification status;*full time activity in the various fields of endocrinology, metabolism and diabetes as a clinician, academician, research physician or any combination of these.

*Full time activity refers to full time focus, not the hours spent in practice in a day/week. For example, an endocrinologist may work part-time, but dedicates 100% of his/her activities in the various fields of endocrinology, metabolism, and diabetes.

If applying under this route, you must:

1.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least 15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course. Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

1.b. Be currently performing at least 100 ultrasound studies per year (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A signed Attestation is required upon application.

1.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.
ROUTE 2: Endocrinologists who completed their endocrinology training prior to the initial 1972 endocrinology subspecialty certification exam of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM). Documentation confirming eligibility is required.

If applying under this route, you must:

2.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least **15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years** prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations' Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). **One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course.** Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

2.b. Be currently performing at least **100 ultrasound studies per year** (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A signed Attestation is required upon application.

2.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.

ROUTE 3: Endocrinology fellows/trainees or endocrine surgeons in training: Physicians in their final year of endocrinology training or in additional, post-endocrinology training or research may apply for the ECNU Program with written verification of status from their program director.

If applying under this route, you must:

3.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which they have received at least **15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years** prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). **One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course.** Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

Note: Fellows who have attended Endocrine University® within the past 3 years may use the CME credits obtained from the Neck Ultrasound and UGFNA portion of the curriculum. If the CME credits are less than the 15-hour requirement for ECNU, additional CME hours must be provided.

3.b. Submit **notarized, validated imaging logs** (signed by an office manager) of **at least 50 ultrasound studies** (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). **Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck.** Logs submitted to the ACE Office should be HIPAA-compliant and should include the following information: total number of exams performed, date of service, type of exam, location, results/diagnosis and recommendations. Logs must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application, and may be submitted as a Word document or Excel spreadsheet.

3.c. Submit a signed attestation confirming that you have performed at least 50 of the required ultrasound studies at the time of your ECNU Application, and that the remaining 50 ultrasound studies be completed within the 12-month period after passing the Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE).

3.d. Submit in writing, a letter from your program director, verifying your status as an Endocrinology Fellow.

3.e. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.
ROUTE 4: Cytopathologists with formal training in the subspecialty of cytopathology with attainment of board certified status under the American Board of Pathology (ABP). Documentation confirming eligibility is required.

If applying under this route, you must:

4.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least 15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). **One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course.** Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

4.b. Be currently performing at least 100 ultrasound studies per year (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A signed Attestation is required upon application.

4.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application Form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.

ROUTE 5: Endocrine Surgeons with formal training in the subspecialty of endocrine surgery with attainment of board certified status under the American Board of Surgery. Documentation confirming eligibility is required.

If applying under this route, you must:

5.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least 15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). **One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course.** Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

5.b. Be currently performing at least 100 ultrasound studies per year (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A Signed Attestation is required upon application.

5.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.
ROUTE 6: Otolaryngologists/Head and Neck Surgeons with formal training in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases related to ear, nose and throat, and related structures of the head and neck, with attainment of board certified status under the American Board of Otolaryngology. Documentation confirming eligibility is required.

If applying under this route, you must:

6.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least 15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course. Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

6.b. Be currently performing at least 100 ultrasound studies per year (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A signed Attestation is required upon application.

6.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.

ROUTE 7: Radiologists with formal training in the subspecialty of radiology with attainment of board certified status under the American Board of Radiology. Documentation confirming eligibility is required.

If applying under this route, you must:

7.a. Have attended CME-accredited, approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s) in which you have received at least 15.0 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ within the past 3 years prior to applying to the ECNU Program. CME hours can be obtained from one or multiple courses, and can be earned from an AACE or other organizations’ Thyroid Ultrasound Course(s). One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course. Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

7.b. Be currently performing at least 100 ultrasound studies per year (70% diagnostic; 30% UGFNA). Studies should include parathyroid ultrasound and thyroid cancer lymph node mapping in the neck. A signed Attestation is required upon application.

7.c. Have submitted a complete ECNU Program Application. Refer to the Appendix section of this Handbook for the ECNU Program Application form and documentation requirements. This form can also be downloaded during open application period, from the AACE website: https://www.aace.com/ecnu.

Who is not eligible to participate in the ECNU Program?
Physicians who do not perform their own ultrasounds or who do not directly supervise an ARDMS-certified sonographer or author diagnostic ultrasound reports. In addition, Technologists, Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, or other allied health professionals are NOT eligible to participate in the ECNU Program at this time.
I have attended an AACE Thyroid Ultrasound Course in the past. Am I considered “certified” in thyroid ultrasound if I took the AACE Thyroid Course?

No, completion of the AACE Course does not mean an individual is certified in Thyroid Ultrasound. The AACE Thyroid Course was accredited for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, and participants who completed the AACE Course were awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and issued a CME credit certificate. To receive the ECNU designation, one must complete the ECNU Program.

**What is the pathway to certification for the ECNU Program?**

The ECNU Program is comprised of the following steps:

**STEP 1: Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE)**

The CCE is a multiple choice, computer-based examination. Achieving a passing grade on the examination will entitle the candidate to continue to the Validation of Competency Process (VCP). If the candidate fails the CCE, he/she must retake and successfully pass the examination prior to continuing to the VCP. To better prepare for the examination, candidates must participate in an approved Thyroid Ultrasound Course (minimum of 15.0 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*) within the past 3 years, prior to taking the CCE. One course must be a basic thyroid ultrasound course. Copy/copies of CME certificate(s) must be submitted with the ECNU Program Application.

**STEP 2: Validation of Competency Process (VCP)**

The Validation of Competency Process assesses the physician’s demonstrated competency, activity, and level of skills to interpret and report complete diagnostic ultrasound examinations (either performed by a supervised ARDMS-certified sonographer with real time confirmation by physician or personally by the physician), and to perform and report UGFNA procedures.

The VCP requires submission of a total of fifteen (15) ultrasound (US) studies and reports, and must be submitted in accordance to the VCP Instructions for Ultrasound Procedure Reports.

Detailed requirements and instructions regarding the validation process are outlined in the Candidate Handbook, and are available via the AACE website at [https://www.aace.com/ecnu](https://www.aace.com/ecnu).

**STEP 3: ECNU Program Completion (Issuance of ECNU Certificate and ECNU Designation)**

Endocrine Certification in Neck Ultrasound (ECNU) is a professional designation awarded to individuals who meet specified knowledge requirements, measured through a standardized examination and validation of competency process in diagnostic ultrasound and ultrasound-guided fine needle aspiration (UGFNA).

- Upon successfully completing the VCP, the candidate will have earned the right to use the ECNU designation after his/her name.
- A formal letter, ECNU Certificate, and ECNU lapel pin will be sent to candidates who have successfully completed the ECNU Program.
- Certification is valid for 10 years.

**What if I do not pass the CCE?**

You can register to re-take the examination during another scheduled testing window. Such registration will be subject to the current guidelines and fees established by ACE.

**How many times can I sit for the CCE?**

There is no limit to the number times you can sit for the CCE.

**When and where can I take the CCE?**

The CCE will be offered twice a year using computer-based testing (CBT), each with a two or three week testing window. It will be administered at Prometric™ testing centers located throughout the United States.
Is the examination scored immediately?
The examination scoring process can take up to six (6) weeks. After scoring is complete, the candidates will receive their score report by mail.

If you pass the examination, your results will NOT include a numeric scale score. It will only contain a statement that you passed. The examination is designed as a minimum competency test for credentialing purposes and is not intended to distinguish between passing scores. This policy is established as a safeguard against misuse of the examination scores by passing candidates.

If you fail the examination, your results will include your total failing scale score. Your failing score report will also contain diagnostic levels in each of six subscore categories based on the six content areas outlined in the Candidate Handbook.

Where can I find the study materials for the CCE?
There are no official study materials for the Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE); however, you may use the reference list found in the Candidate Handbook. The examination questions are mapped to these references.

What topics will be covered in the examination?
The examination will cover the following major topic areas:
I. Principles of Ultrasound Imaging – 15%
II. Neck Anatomy – 15%
III. Thyroid Pathology – 34%
IV. Parathyroid Pathology – 10%
V. Lymph Node Pathology – 10%
VI. Ultrasound-Guided Fine Needle Aspiration (UGFNA) – 16%

How much will it cost to participate in the ECNU Program?
The ECNU Program is comprised of two major steps – Step 1: the Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE) and Step 2: the Validation of Competency Process (VCP). Candidates who wish to obtain ECNU designation must complete the certification program and pay the fees for both the CCE and the VCP. The fee structure for the ECNU Program is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CCE</th>
<th>VCP</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACE Member</td>
<td>$350</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-AACE Member</td>
<td>$550</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>$1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Fellows/Retired AACE Members</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$1,050</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*NOTE FOR FELLOWS:* A letter from Department Chair verifying status must accompany application. Fellow's fees only apply if candidate is in his/her final year of fellowship program. Fellows who have completed the fellowship program will be charged the AACE Member or non-member rate, whichever is applicable at the time of application. All fees are non-refundable, regardless of whether you pass, fail or do not complete the certification process in the allotted timeframe. (e.g. failure to submit VCP).

How will the fees be collected for CCE and VCP? Do I need to pay the total amount when I apply for the ECNU Program?
Fees for CCE and VCP will be collected separately. Your first payment will be for the CCE, and this must be submitted with your ECNU Program Application. Do not pay for the VCP fee until you have received official notification that you have successfully passed the CCE and are ready to submit your Validation of Competency Process application and package.

How do I apply for the ECNU Program?
Please read the Candidate Handbook (https://www.aace.com/ecnu) to learn more about the ECNU Program, and to find out if you are eligible to apply. The ECNU Program Application form can be downloaded from the AACE website during any open application period.
Applications can be submitted to ACE either online or by postal mail.

1. Paper Application

Candidates have the ability to download the paper application from the AACE website during open application period. For reference, all forms are also included in the Candidate Handbook.

Paper applicants must include payment with the application or may use a credit card or personal check as form of payment. Please make checks payable to the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE). Checks must be in U.S. dollars and drawn on a U.S. bank.

An application cannot be processed until all fees are paid in full. For a detailed fee structure, see the payment section of the application.

2. Online Application

The online application can be accessed via the AACE website. The link will only be provided during the application period. Online applicants must provide a valid (working) e-mail address that is capable of receiving e-mail from AACE.

Note: For AACE Members utilizing the Online Application - In order to receive the member rate for the CCE, log on to the AACE website using member log in ID, before completing the online application and payment process.

Proceed through each screen of the application, carefully following the on-screen instructions and providing the information required. Applicants must complete all sections of the online application. Incomplete applications will not be processed.

What happens next after I submit my ECNU application?

Upon confirmation of eligibility to take the CCE, the candidate will receive an Authorization to Test (ATT) letter, via postal mail. The ATT letter authorizes the candidate to take the CCE, and will include the following information:

- The contact information for Prometric™, so the candidate can schedule an examination based on the identified testing window
- Details on how to schedule an examination date with Prometric™
- Information on how to reschedule or cancel an examination, should that become necessary

Who is Prometric™?

Prometric™ is a wholly-owned, independently operated subsidiary of Education Testing Service (ETS). Prometric™ provides computer based testing sites, allowing the greatest access possible to take the AACE Comprehensive Certification Examination (CCE). For more information on Prometric™, please go to www.prometric.com

How do I find a Prometric™ testing center?

Information on how to register at a Prometric™ testing center will be included with the Authorization to Test (ATT) letter or may be accessed at www.prometric.com.

Examination Application Process at a Glance

Candidate completes application form ⇒ Candidate submits application and all required documentation to ACE ⇒ ACE acknowledges receipt of application via e-mail ⇒ ACE reviews application ⇒ ACE sends Authorization to Test (ATT) letter to accepted candidates ⇒ Candidate registers for exam with Prometric™ ⇒ Prometric™ sends electronic confirmation to candidate ⇒ Candidate takes examination at Prometric™ site
How long is the ECNU designation valid?
The ECNU designation is valid for ten (10) years. The recertification period will begin the first January after the year in which the ECNU designation is awarded. The certificant will have until January 1, ten (10) years later to complete the recertification requirements.

For example, if the ECNU designation was obtained May 14, 2010, the recertification period will begin January 1, 2011 and all recertification requirements must be completed prior to January 1, 2021, when the certification will expire.

Additional information regarding the ECNU recertification process will be posted on the AACE website in the near future, so please continue checking https://www.aace.com/ecnu.

Where can I find more information regarding the ECNU Program?
To learn more about the ECNU Program, please go to https://www.aace.com/ecnu. The 2013 ECNU Candidate Handbook is also available for download on the AACE website.

When is the next CCE test window and when will ACE start accepting applications?
Test Window:
The next test window is Saturday, February 1, 2014 – Saturday, February 22, 2014. Upon notification of acceptance, the candidate will schedule the examination with Prometric™, the test vendor.

Application Deadline:
All application information and requirements will be posted on the AACE website by December 16, 2013, and you can complete the application process from Monday, December 16, 2013 – Friday, January 10, 2014. The deadline for submission is Friday, January 10, 2014. Application must be submitted and all fees paid by the deadline to be eligible for the examination.

Questions about the ECNU Program?
Please contact the Certification Manager for information regarding the AACE Endocrine Certification in Neck Ultrasound (ECNU) Program.

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