



Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology

# **Clinical Lipid Specialist Certification Guide**

**Updated January 2017**

**[www.lipidspecialist.org](http://www.lipidspecialist.org)**

**Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology**  
6816 Southpoint Parkway, Suite 1000  
Jacksonville, FL 32216  
904.309.6250  
[www.lipidspecialist.org](http://www.lipidspecialist.org)



## **History**

The concept of a certification program was spearheaded by the National Lipid Association (NLA) to provide opportunities for professional development and formal recognition of the specialized expertise of healthcare professionals with a focus in clinical lipidology. The Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology (ACCL) was incorporated as an independent organization in 2006 to develop and administer the Clinical Lipid Specialist (CLS) exam. In 2009 the Lipid Competency Certificate (LCC) program (formerly called the Basic Competency in Clinical Lipidology exam) was created to offer a professional development opportunity to any healthcare professional or paraprofessional with an interest or involvement in the area of dyslipidemia.

Although the ACCL is now a self-governing and separate entity from the NLA, the two organizations work collaboratively to ensure that there are adequate educational and professional development opportunities for healthcare professionals involved in lipid management to help them meet the prerequisites of the certifying examinations.

## **Mission**

*The Mission of the Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology is to establish, certify, and maintain the clinical competencies of qualified healthcare professionals who have a focus in clinical lipidology.*

## **About the ACCL**

The ACCL is an independent certifying organization that has developed standards and examinations in the field of clinical lipidology for the growing number of healthcare professionals who are involved in lipid management.

ACCL provides recognition and distinction in the field of clinical lipidology for healthcare professionals who successfully credential and complete a written examination. Certification by the ACCL provides benefits to both the practitioner and the profession by:

- Improving the quality of patient care
- Setting benchmarks of clinical competency for lipid specialists
- Encouraging ongoing learning and improvement required for professional excellence over a lifetime of practice
- Helping healthcare professionals achieve recognition of their specialized training and qualifications
- Enhancing the credibility of the healthcare professionals and the specialty of clinical lipidology in the medical community

## **Who Should Take the CLS Exam?**

The CLS exam is ideal for healthcare professionals in clinical or academic practice who are actively involved in patient management and seeking to demonstrate their expertise in clinical

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lipidology and commitment to continued professional development in lipid management. The exam is open to licensed physicians, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants, registered dietitians/nutritionists, registered clinical exercise physiologists, certified clinical exercise physiologist and other healthcare professionals who have demonstrated clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders. It is currently only open to those practicing in the United States or Canada, and applicants must first meet qualifying criteria to sit for the exam.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To become credentialed, candidates must meet the following requirements:

1. Basic Eligibility Criteria
2. Patient Care/Education Requirement
3. Training Requirement

Although rigorous, the requirements are designed to provide an avenue for advanced healthcare providers with demonstrated knowledge and experience in Lipidology to become certified as Clinical Lipid Specialists.

### **Basic Eligibility Criteria**

1. United States or Canadian Resident
2. One of the following healthcare professionals with a license to practice (if applicable for your profession):
  - Licensed Physician
  - Licensed Nurse Practitioner/Clinical Nurse Specialist
  - Licensed Registered Nurse
  - Licensed Pharmacist
  - Licensed Physician Assistant
  - Licensed Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist through the CDR (proof of registration required for states that do not require licensure)
  - Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist through the ACSM
  - Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist through the ACSM
  - Other Healthcare Professionals\*

**Documentation: Candidates must submit a copy of their professional license with current expiration date with application.**

\*Healthcare professionals who don't hold a license, registration or degree as described in basic eligibility requirements and/or education requirements can apply via this pathway. These candidates must have 2 years of demonstrated clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders. Acceptance of these applications will be at the discretion of the ACCL credentialing committee. More information on this pathway can be found below.

## Patient Care/Education Requirements

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Patient Care Requirement</b>
Masters or higher in a related health science	2,000 contact hours (1 year) of demonstrated clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders or other related disorders <i>Documentation: Copy of diploma of highest degree earned and 1 letter of recommendation from an individual qualified to comment on your work and/or experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</i>
Bachelors in a related health science	3,000 contact hours (1.5 years) of demonstrated clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders or other related disorders <i>Documentation: Copy of diploma of highest degree earned and 1 letter of recommendation from an individual qualified to comment on your work and/or experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</i>
Other – don't hold a license, registration or degree as described in basic eligibility requirements and/or education requirements	4,000 contact hours (2 years) of clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders or other related disorders <i>Documentation: 2 letters of recommendation from individuals qualified to comment on your work and/or experience in the management of patients with dyslipidemias and copies of certificates and diplomas claimed (as applicable).</i>

## Training Requirement

Candidates must show proof of earning a minimum of 200 points to successfully credential for certification. Points can be accumulated as described below. Candidates do NOT need to show proof of earning points in all 5 categories described.

<b>Physicians</b>		<b>Points</b>
1.	<b>Certification in a recognized Board (ABIM, ABFM, AOBIM, etc).</b> Documentation: Copy of certificates form Board(s).	<b>50</b>
2.	<b>Subspecialty certification in endocrinology, diabetes, cardiology, nephrology, etc.</b>  <b>OR</b> <b>Other relevant certificates/advanced training (CDE, nutrition gastroenterology, pediatric cardiology/endocrinology, hypertension, etc.).</b> Documentation: Copy of certificates.  <i>Max 100 points from above categories.</i>	<b>50</b>   <b>10-50</b>
3.	<b>Academic practice and/or relevant faculty appointment at ACGME</b>	<b>50</b>

	<b>recognized institution.</b> Documentation: Letter from Department Chair or Division Chief at the ACGME recognized academic institution(s) confirming appointment(s) and explaining relevance to lipid management.	
4.	<b>Clinical research and/or scholarly publications in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</b> Documentation: List and highlight all relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed publications in the WORD document or on your CV.	<b>10 per publication (up to 50)</b>
5.	<b>Lipid-focused continuing education obtained within the previous 5 years.</b> Documentation: Complete the CME/CE Credit Tracking Form and attach copies of certificates for the activities you submit for points. Titles of activities must be clearly identified.	<b>2 per credit hour earned</b>
<b>Nurse Practitioners Clinical Nurse Specialists Nurses Physician Assistants</b>		<b>Points</b>
1.	<b>Certification in a recognized Board (ANCC, AANP, NCCPA, etc.)</b> Documentation: Copy of certificates form Board(s).	<b>50</b>
2.	<b>Higher education: Doctoral degree or other relevant certificates/ advanced training.</b> Documentation: Copies of certificates.  <i>Max 100 points from above categories.</i>	<b>50</b>
3.	<b>Academic practice and/or relevant faculty appointment at recognized institution.</b> Documentation: Letter from Department Chair or Division Chief recognized academic institution(s) confirming appointment(s) and explaining relevance to lipid management.	<b>50</b>
4.	<b>Clinical research and/or scholarly publications in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</b> Documentation: List and highlight all relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed publications in the WORD document or on your CV.	<b>10 per publication (up to 50)</b>
5.	<b>Lipid-focused continuing education obtained within the previous 5 years.</b> Documentation: Complete the CME/CE Credit Tracking Form and attach copies of certificates for the activities you submit for points. Titles of activities must be clearly identified.	<b>2 per credit hour earned</b>
<b>Pharmacists</b>		<b>Points</b>
1.	<b>Certification in a recognized Board (BPS, etc.).</b>  <b>OR</b> <b>Advanced licensure recognized by the state and/or other relevant certificates/advanced training</b> Documentation: Copy of certificates.	<b>50</b>  <b>10-50</b>
2.	<b>Relevant accredited post-graduate training of at least 1 year (if not accounted for in basic requirements) OR higher education (Post Baccalaureate, PharmD).</b> Documentation: Copies of certificates.	<b>50</b>

	<b>Max 100 points from above categories.</b>	
3.	<b>Academic practice and/or relevant faculty appointment at recognized institution.</b> Documentation: Letter from Department Chair or Division Chief recognized academic institution(s) confirming appointment(s) and explaining relevance to lipid management.	50
4.	<b>Clinical research and/or scholarly publications in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</b> Documentation: List and highlight all relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed publications in the WORD document or on your CV.	10 per publication (up to 50)
5.	<b>Lipid-focused continuing education obtained within the previous 5 years.</b> Documentation: Complete the CME/CE Credit Tracking Form and attach copies of certificates for the activities you submit for points. Titles of activities must be clearly identified.	2 per credit hour earned
<b>Registered Dietitian/Nutritionists Clinical Exercise Physiologists</b>		<b>Points</b>
1.	<b>Certificate of Training in Adult Weight Management, other relevant certificates/advanced training (CDE, FADA, etc.).</b> Documentation: Copies of certificates.	50
2.	<b>Higher education: Doctoral degree or other relevant certificates/advanced training.</b> Documentation: copies of certificates.	50
<b>Max 100 points from above categories.</b>		
3.	<b>Academic practice and/or relevant faculty appointment at recognized institution.</b> Documentation: Letter from Department Chair or Division Chief recognized academic institution(s) confirming appointment(s) and explaining relevance to lipid management.	50
4.	<b>Clinical research and/or scholarly publications in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</b> Documentation: List and highlight all relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed publications in the WORD document or on your CV.	10 per publication (up to 50)
5.	<b>Lipid-focused continuing education obtained within the previous 5 years.</b> Documentation: Complete the CME/CE Credit Tracking Form and attach copies of certificates for the activities you submit for points. Titles of activities must be clearly identified.	2 per credit hour earned
<b>Other Healthcare Professionals</b>		<b>Points</b>
1.	<b>Certification in a recognized Board.</b> Documentation: Copies of certificates.	50
2.	<b>Higher education: Doctoral degree or other relevant certificates/advanced training.</b> Documentation: Copies of certificates.	50
<b>Max 100 point from above categories.</b>		
3.	<b>Academic practice and/or relevant faculty appointment at recognized institution.</b> Documentation: Letter from Department Chair or Division Chief recognized	50

	academic institution(s) confirming appointment(s) and explaining relevance to lipid management.	
4.	<b>Clinical research and/or scholarly publications in the management of patients with lipid disorders.</b> Documentation: List and highlight all relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed publications in the WORD document or on your CV.	<b>10 per publication (up to 50)</b>
5.	<b>Lipid-focused continuing education obtained within the previous 5 years.</b> Documentation: Complete the CME/CE Credit Tracking Form and attach copies of certificates for the activities you submit for points. Titles of activities must be clearly identified.	<b>2 per credit hour earned</b>

### **Other Healthcare Professionals Pathway**

Healthcare professionals who don't hold a license, registration or degree as described in basic eligibility requirements and/or education requirements can apply via this pathway. These candidates must be active in clinical activities and have at least 4,000 contact hours (2 years) of demonstrated clinical experience in the management of patients with lipid disorders.

Acceptance of these applications will be at the discretion of the ACCL credentialing committee.

Candidates applying via this pathway must submit the following (as applicable):

1. Current CV detailing experience and credentials
2. Copies of all relevant diplomas, certificates, etc.
3. 2 letters of recommendation from individuals qualified to comment on work and/or experience in the management of patients with dyslipidemias.

### **Testing Windows**

The CLS exam is offered 3 times a year. The 2017 testing windows are as follows:

**Spring 2017:** March 19 – April 29, 2017

***Application Deadline: March 10, 2017***

**Summer 2017:** June 11 – July 22, 2017

***Application Deadline: June 2, 2017***

**Fall 2017:** September 3 – October 14, 2017

***Application Deadline: August 25, 2017***

Candidates must complete and return application by appropriate application deadline for testing window in which they would like to take the exam. If application is accepted (and once scheduling for the appropriate testing window opens) candidates will receive an e-mail with instructions on how to schedule their exam on a date/time during their associated testing window that works for them. See exam delivery section below for more information.

### **Exam Information**

#### **Content of Exam**

The content areas of the CLS examination reflect the knowledge, skills, and attitudes deemed essential for the competent practice of lipidology. The examination has been constructed at the upper level of difficulty and consists of approximately 145 multiple-choice questions. Candidates have 4 hours to complete the exam.

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Subject Area	Percent of Exam
Pharmacology	24%
Nutrition/Exercise	17%
Metabolic Syndrome	10%
Clinical Trials	10%
Risk Assessment	10%
Lipid Metabolism	9%
Genetics	6%
Adherence and Compliance	6%
Special Populations	5%
Vascular Biology	3%

### Passing Score

The passing score is based on an expected level of knowledge; it is not related to the distribution of scores obtained during a particular examination administration. In other words, each candidate is measured against a standard of knowledge, not against the performance of other individuals taking the examination. A passing score on the CLS exam is 62%.

### Pass Rate

The pass rate for the CLS exam ranges from 80–85%.

### Exam Delivery

#### Online Proctoring

The CLS exam is offered via online proctoring through our testing vendor Kryterion Webassessor. Online proctoring provides a secure and convenient way for candidates to complete exams online using a webcam and internet connection to connect with certified proctors. **The ACCL allows the use of either a personal external or internal web camera.**

Candidates approved to take the exam will be provided with a scheduling permit via e-mail which will enable them to register for their online proctored exam. There is often immediate availability. For a successful testing experience, we recommend that you verify computer requirements, test your equipment and install sentinel Secure™ at least 48 hours prior to your scheduled proctored exam.

The online proctoring test taker guide can be found at: <https://www.lipidspecialist.org/pdfs/test-taker.pdf>

The Kryterion Webassessor support page can be found at: [www.KryterionOnline.com/Support](http://www.KryterionOnline.com/Support).

**Candidates who would prefer to take the exam at a Kryterion Webassessor testing center must contact the ACCL office at least 2 weeks prior to preferred exam date.** Although administered at a testing center, the exam is still computer-based. Dates and times available during testing windows are dependent on each testing center's hours of operation. Those taking their CLS exam at a testing center must abide by the following rules:

- Bring proof of ID (valid driver's license, passport, etc.)
- Arrive at testing center approximately 30 minutes prior to testing time (late arrivals may be admitted, but will not be given extra time to take exam)
- No books or other reference materials may be taken into the examination room



- Simple calculators are permitted, but no smart phones, cell phones, books or other reference materials may be taken into the examination room
- No signaling devices, including pagers, cell phones, laptops, and alarms may be operative during the examination
- Food (including candy and gum), beverages, and tobacco products are not permitted in the testing room
- No test materials, documents, or memoranda of any sort are to be taken from the examination room
- No questions concerning content of the examination may be asked during the testing period
- Exam candidates may leave the testing room to use the restroom but will not receive any additional time to complete the examination

### **Application Procedures**

#### **Initial Applications**

Applications are available for download on the ACCL website at:

[https://www.lipidspecialist.org/certchoose/cls/cls\\_application.php](https://www.lipidspecialist.org/certchoose/cls/cls_application.php)

Candidates must submit their applications with payment to ACCL by the appropriate application deadline to be considered for the exam. Payment of the examination fee must accompany your application. Before mailing your application, please review carefully the information and make sure that your application is complete and legible. All communications in regard to the exam, with the exception of exam scores, will be sent by email. Candidates are reminded to provide a current email address at the time of application and to inform the ACCL of any changes.

Exam applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received.

#### **Application Fees**

Credentialing Fee	\$120 (non-refundable)
Examination Fee	\$379
<b>Total Certification Fee</b>	<b>\$499</b>

#### **Refunds/Cancellation Policy**

Regardless of its action on any application, the ACCL will retain a \$120 non-refundable credentialing fee and will require candidates to pay all fees and meet eligibility criteria applicable at the time of any future application.

Telephone cancellations cannot be accepted. A written notice of cancellation must be received no later than 2 weeks prior to the examination for a refund less a \$120 credentialing fee.

#### **Rescheduling Exam/Postponing Exam**

If a candidate wishes to reschedule or postpone their exam until another testing window, they must contact the ACCL office within no less than 72 hours from currently scheduled exam. Exams cancelled within or after this 72-hour period will be charged a \$95 re-seat fee.

Additionally, It is a policy of the ACCL that once a candidate's application has been approved, they must sit for the CLS exam within 1 year of submitting application or they will forfeit all paid fees and be required to submit a new application and full fee to sit for a future exam.

#### **Retaking the Exam**

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Candidates who do not achieve a passing score on the exam are eligible to submit a re-application at a discounted fee of \$250. Re-examinations must occur within 1 year following the failed examination. The CLS certification exam may be re-taken up to 3 times, or 4 times total. If a candidate fails 4 examinations, eligibility is withheld for a period of 2 years. The ACCL reserves the right to verify re-application information provided prior to the re-application being approved.

If more than 1 year has passed since taking the exam, candidates will need to submit a complete new application and pay the full application fee of \$499.

The CLS re-application can be found at:

<https://www.lipidspecialist.org/certchoose/cls/reapply.php>

**Mail Complete Application Packages to:**

Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology  
ATTN: Certification Coordinator  
6816 Southpoint Parkway, Suite 1000  
Jacksonville, FL 32216

**Exam Security Measures**

Strict security measures are maintained throughout all phases of examination development and administration.

If taking the exam via online proctoring, biometrics are used to confirm candidate's identity. Kryterion Webassessor uses several types of authentication methods: passwords, keystroke analytics, and facial recognition.

If taking the exam at a testing center, candidates are required to present a form of photo identification in order to enter the testing center. Trained proctors supervise the administration of the examination, maintaining the strictest security throughout the testing period. Irregularities observed during the testing period, such as creating a disturbance, giving or receiving unauthorized information or aid to or from other persons, or attempting to remove test materials or notes from the testing room, may be sufficient cause to terminate candidate participation in the examination administration or to invalidate a score. Irregularities may also be evidenced by subsequent statistical analysis of testing materials.

The ACCL reserves the right to investigate each incident of suspected misconduct or irregularity. The examination is a copyrighted work of the Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology. Any unauthorized copying of the exam or of any questions may constitute copyright infringement.

**Reporting of Results**

Candidates will receive their results via the United States postal service within 4-6 weeks from the last day of the testing window. Results are only released to the individual candidate. All candidates will receive:

1. A letter indicating their exam results
2. A diagnostic score report showing their performance in each content area

Any questions concerning test results should be referred to the ACCL office at 904.309.6250.

Those who successfully pass the exam will receive their certificate shortly after receiving their exam results. All certificates contain the Diplomates certification expiration date as well as their unique certification identification number.

### **ACCL Designations/Use of Credentials**

Candidates who successfully pass the CLS exam will earn the designation "Clinical Lipid Specialist". This credential may be abbreviated and used in the signature of professionals as follows:

**Approved Designation:** John Smith, PharmD, CLS

**Approved Designation:** John Smith, PharmD, CLS, Diplomate, Accreditation Council for Clinical Lipidology

There may also be limitations imposed by your state or professional licensure board.

### **Renewal of Certification (ROC)**

The ACCL requires that all CLS renew their certification every 10 years to maintain active status. A CLS can continue to use this credential by maintaining their license to practice (if applicable) and meeting the CLS ROC requirements in place at the time of their renewal. Those who do not renew their certification, must cease using the CLS credential after the associated expiration date.

ROC requirements for the CLS exam can be found at:

<https://www.lipidspecialist.org/certchoose/cls/renewal.php>

### **Nondiscrimination Policy**

The ACCL does not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, medical condition, physical disability, or marital status. All applications submitted for certification are individually reviewed on the basis of information submitted.

The ACCL complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations for those with documented disabilities taking the exam and for other individuals taking the exam with qualifying medical conditions that may be temporary or are not otherwise covered by the ADA. Accommodations may be made for these individuals, provided a request for special accommodations is submitted with application. Please note that the CLS application has a section to indicate any special accommodations needed.