

Differences Between Subspecialty Certification and Focused Practice Designation

Subspecialty certification relates to a specific component of a specialty to which a practicing physician or medical specialist (also known as diplomates) may devote a significant portion of time. Practice in the subspecialty follows special educational experience – an ACGME-accredited training program of at least one (1) year in duration – in addition to that required for general certification. Focused practice designation recognizes the value that diplomates who focus some or all of their practice within a specific area of a specialty and/or subspecialty can provide to improving health care. These areas may be the focus of some or all of a diplomate’s practice. They are more limited in scope than those covered by subspecialty certification or may be procedural but without the extensive scientific, clinical, and organizational underpinnings of a separate subspecialty.

	SUBSPECIALTY CERTIFICATION	FOCUSED PRACTICE DESIGNATION
Description	The credential granted by a Member Board to a diplomate for successfully completing and maintaining the Member Board requirements for the subspecialty.	The credential granted by a Member Board to a diplomate who demonstrates additional expertise and continued focus in a particular area of a specialty or subspecialty.
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes an identifiable component of a specialty to which a diplomate may devote a significant portion of time Incorporates specific and identifiable body of knowledge that may include certain procedural skills or practice modes but must not be limited only to training in a technical skill. Requires additional fellowship training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows Member Boards to innovate and recognize areas of practice within existing specialties and subspecialties that either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evolve as diplomates progress throughout their professional careers or emerge as medicine changes due to advances in medical knowledge, are more limited in scope than those covered by the subspecialty certification credential or may be procedural but without the extensive scientific, clinical, and organizational underpinnings of a separate subspecialty. Expertise in these areas is gained through clinical experience and may include formal training. Serves to provide rigor of Member Board credentialing process for non ACGME-Accredited training programs. Relates to some or all of a diplomate’s practice
Eligibility	Initial certification in a subspecialty requires diplomates to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current unrestricted license. Certification in a specialty of a Member Board. At least one (1) year of ACGME-accredited fellowship training. 	Focused practice designation requires diplomates to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active specialty/subspecialty certificate. Meet continuing certification requirements. Expertise gained through clinical experience, which may include formal training.
Assessment	Initial certification examination and other assessment(s) as defined by the Member Board.	Member Board-based assessment.
Continuing Certification	Board-specified; covering range of the subspecialty.	Board-specified; may be tailored to area of focused practice; includes maintaining the required specialty/subspecialty certification.
Reporting	Reported as a subspecialty certificate.	Reported as a Focused Practice Designation
Co-sponsorship	Scope of practice does not vary based on specialty of the diplomate.	Scope of practice may vary based on specialty or subspecialty certification.