

American Association for Respiratory Care  
Continuing Respiratory Care Education Program



CRCE<sup>®</sup> Policies, Operational Requirements, and  
Criteria for the Approval of an Educational Activity

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## Continuing Education Defined

The purpose of the AARC's Continuing Respiratory Care Education (CRCE®) program is to accredit continuing educational programs for respiratory therapists. The criteria for accrediting programs are established by the AARC and reflect the continuing education requirements of the Respiratory Care State Boards throughout the U.S.

Continuing education is the learning process used by professionals to keep abreast of changes in their respective fields to improve the quality of services they offer. In the context of respiratory therapy, continuing education can help the therapist maintain his/her knowledge and skill while providing new information to modernize the therapeutic and diagnostic techniques learned in formal education.

For the purpose of the AARC's CRCE® program, "continuing education" is defined as the variety of learning experiences meant to enhance the knowledge of respiratory therapists, enabling them to provide safe, and effective respiratory care to patients. Continuing education may also be used to define learning experiences related to the education and management of respiratory therapists and respiratory therapy services, health promotion and disease management, patient safety, health care cost containment, healthcare law and ethics and emergency preparedness.

Educational activities are either provider-directed or learner-directed. These activities are aimed at accomplishing measurable educational objectives that are developed from the perspective of the learner.

One CRCE® contact hour is defined as 60 minutes of learning activity. Partial CRCE® contact hours may be awarded (0.5, 2.3, etc.) for Traditional CRCE applications with multiple sessions. In calculating learning time, time to complete testing and course evaluation is allowed. The achievement of a passing test score on a comprehensive examination is required only for learner directed (Non-traditional) programs. The AARC makes the final determination of the number of contact hours awarded. The minimum number of CRCE for a complete application is 1.0 contact hours.

## Acceptable Topics for CRCE Accreditation

- All areas addressed in the content matrix of the credentialing examinations developed by the [National Board for Respiratory Care](#) (NBRC):
  - Adult Critical Care Specialist (RRT-ACCS®)
  - Certified Pulmonary Function Technologist (CPFT®)
  - Neonatal/Pediatric Respiratory Care Specialist (CRT-NPS® or RRT-NPS®)
  - Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist (CPFT®)
  - Sleep Disorders Testing and Therapeutic Intervention Respiratory Care Specialist (CRT-SDS® or RRT-SDS®)
  - Therapist Multiple Choice Examination and Clinical Simulation Examination for the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT®) and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT®) credentials
- All areas addressed in the content matrix of the RPSGT® credentialing examination developed by the [Board of Polysomnographic Technologists](#) (BRPT)

- All areas addressed in the content matrix of the AE-C® credentialing examination developed by the [National Asthma Educator Certification Board](#) (NAECB)
- Emerging technology and its application in the delivery of respiratory care
- Courses and/or programs may be accredited if the content is not directly related to clinical practice but relates to:
  - Education, supervision, and management
  - Health care cost containment or cost management
  - Preventative health services and health promotion
  - Medical ethics and legal aspects of health care
  - Patient safety/infection control
  - Bioterrorism and emergency preparedness
- Through special arrangement, CRCE® contact hours may be awarded for participation in the peer-review process of journals listed in Index Medicus. To be able to provide CRCE® to their reviewers, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal must have their review process and the amount of CRCE® awarded approved by the AARC's CRCE® accreditation process.

## **Continuing Education versus Inservice Education**

Continuing education programs consist of learning experiences designed to *strengthen* and *expand* the knowledge and skills of respiratory therapists involved in respiratory therapy practice, education, administration and research.

Inservice education for activities that fulfill assigned general responsibilities specific to the expectations of employers will not be approved for CRCE® contact hours. Sessions covering general institutional policies and procedures and orientation to the facility are examples of these activities. Other examples include annual competency evaluations, equipment “blitz” days, and review activities that are designed to document competency of procedures performed by the respiratory therapist. Inservice education activities, while important to the quality of the care delivered by the respiratory therapist, do not qualify for CRCE® accreditation.

The AARC does approve courses focusing on emerging technology and its application in the delivery of respiratory care. Because of this, if a facility acquires a new medical device that was not previously used in that facility or implements a new diagnostic test or therapeutic procedure that results from scientific advancement, a course to provide initial competency to the staff is eligible for CRCE® accreditation. This is allowed for the initial introduction of that technology, diagnostic test or therapeutic procedure only. After the technology becomes part of the services offered by that facility, any future educational instruction for that technology is considered as inservice education and not eligible for CRCE®.

## **Key Contact Person**

A key contact person who is administratively responsible for the providing all required information about the program, assuring the program is presented as described, and completing all administrative responsibilities associated with the course must be designated within the application. This person need not be a member of the planning committee.

## **Planning Committee**

The members of the planning committee must be identified in the application. Represented on the planning committee must be a *minimum* of one person with one or more of the following credentials: RRT®, CRT®, CPFT®, RPFT®, RPSGT®, AE-C®. The required credential must be relevant to the course content. For example, a planner with only an RPSGT credential would not be appropriate for a course focused on asthma disease management but a person with an AE-C credential would.

## **Presenters/Authors**

The person who delivers the content in the course or program is called the presenter in a traditional activity or the author in a non-traditional activity. The presenter/author is identified as a content expert and, as such, must be able to deliver the content in the context of respiratory care, in a language that is understood by respiratory therapists, and without commercial influence. The sponsor of the activity is responsible for ensuring the qualifications of the presenter/author for the activity. Qualified presenters/authors are those who are credentialed and/or hold a professional license that defines the scope of practice encompassing the topic being presented. Persons without a valid credential or license are not qualified for CRCE® approval. Exceptions are made for those persons for whom exceptional expertise can be provided and aligned with the program objectives.

## **Types of Activities/Programs**

### **Traditional (Provider-Directed)**

A traditional or provider directed educational activity requires the learner and provider to interact in real time. This interaction can happen remotely but must occur during the allotted time for the activity. The provider determines pace of the program and schedules the activity. One of the following criteria must be met for the activity to be considered traditional.

1. The activity can be a live, in-person educational session. Examples include: stand-alone lectures or those that are part of a live convention, symposium, seminar, workshop, etc.
2. The activity can be a real-time, virtual activity with direct access to the speaker either during or immediately following the activity. Direct access to the speaker must take place on or through the same platform used to deliver the activity. Examples include virtual webinars, webcasts, videoconferences, audio conferences etc.
3. The activity can be a prerecorded, virtual activity with direct access to the speaker either during or immediately following the conclusion of the activity.

Direct access to the speaker must take place on or through the same platform used to deliver the activity.

FAQs:

Q1. Does an on-demand, pre-recorded educational activity with access to the speaker through a one-on-one phone call or email qualify for traditional continuing education?

A1: No. Direct access to the speaker must take place either during or immediately following the activity. Direct access to the speaker must take place on or through the same platform used to deliver the activity and accessible by all program participants. For example, if the pre-recorded session is played on Zoom, the live Q&A must also take place through Zoom (or routed to another platform via Zoom).

Q2. I have a library of courses which can be accessed on-demand at any time. Speakers have agreed to be contacted by phone or email for a Q&A session. Does this qualify for traditional continuing education?

A2: No. Traditional courses must be live. On-demand courses do not qualify as a live event. It is impossible for an on-demand activity to include a live Q&A, which must take place either during or immediately following the activity on or through the same platform used to present the educational activity.

- **Contact hour designation:** Contact hour credit awarded is based on the time allocated for the exchange of information between the presenter and the learner.
- **Content designation:** In traditional courses, each session may have a specific content designation.
- **Approval period:** These courses are approved for one year. They may be repeated any time during their accreditation period by providing the required information and fees either at the time of initial application or after the course has been approved. These repeat programs will be instantly accredited upon application.
- **Partial credit:** Only traditional programs may allow partial credit to participants if requested by the course sponsor. This means that CRCE® contact hours can be awarded for attending specific sessions within the entire program. It is incumbent upon the course sponsor to report only the sessions actually attended by each participant.

### **Non-traditional (Learner-Directed)**

A non-traditional learning activity (learner-directed, independent study) is one that is conducted by the learner at his or her own pace. The instructor does not interact with the learner in real time. The formats for non-traditional activities include, but are not limited to studies of web-based courses, archived webinars, podcasts, videotapes, audiotapes, monographs or the content of journals listed in Index Medicus.

- **Contact hour designation:** The number of contact hours awarded is determined by the AARC and is based on the estimated average time required to complete the learning materials, tests and evaluations.
- **Content designation:** In contrast to traditional courses, only one content designation may be assigned to a non-traditional course.
- **Post-tests:** Satisfactory completion of a post-test is required to meet the requirements of all learner-directed courses.
- **Approval period:** Non-traditional courses are approved for one year from a date designated by the sponsor, or two years from this date upon request to the AARC Education Department. Requests for the additional year may be made after the application has been submitted or immediately following its approval. An additional full application fee is required to add the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
- **Partial credit:** No partial credit may be awarded for non-traditional courses. Participants must complete all content and pass all required post-tests.

### Application Deadlines and Late Fees

To assure that participants receive a certificate of completion with the correct course number, educational activities submitted must complete review prior to the first date of presentation. **No retroactive recognition will be granted.** In order to have full advantage of the review process, application data must be submitted at least 31 days prior to the initial presentation of the program. Applications received after the 31-day deadline will be assessed a late fee and will not be reviewed until payment for the application fee and late fee is received. Applications received less than 15 days prior to the initial offering of the program cannot be accepted unless special permission is provided by the AARC.

### Content Designation

Based upon the session content, only one of the following content designations shall be assigned to each instructional session in traditional programs. Only one content area can be assigned to a non-traditional course, regardless of the number of modules. Content designations requested on the application are subject to AARC reviewer approval.

Content Area	Source	Comment
Adult Acute Care (AAC)	NBRC	Contains content appropriate for the NBRC's ACCS credential maintenance programs
Bioterrorism and Emergency Preparedness (BEP)	AARC/CRCE®	Includes issues related to planning for medical emergency situations. *
Clinical Practice (CLP)	AARC/CRCE®	All areas of clinical practice addressed by NBRC and AE-C examination content areas and emerging respiratory therapy technology.

Education (EDU)	AARC/CRCE®	Program development, instruction, and evaluation. Includes respiratory disease management and health promotion.
Ethics (ETH)	AARC/CRCE®	Medical ethics and legal aspects of healthcare. *
Management (MGT)	AARC/CRCE®	Management and supervision of personnel and operations including cost containment
Neonatal-Pediatric (NPS)	NBRC	Contains content appropriate for the NBRC's NPS credential maintenance programs
Patient Safety (PTS)	AARC/CRCE®	Patient safety including medication errors*, errors related to the delivery of care, AIDS/HIV* and infection control*, and cultural competency.
Pulmonary Function (PFT)	NBRC	Contains content appropriate for the NBRC's pulmonary function technology credential maintenance program
Sleep Medicine (SDS)	NBRC	Contains content appropriate for the NBRC's SDS credential maintenance program and RPGST credential

*\*Designates content areas mandated by some state licensure boards.*

## Application Submission

All applications must be submitted via the [AARC CRCE® Online Application system](#). New applicants must be connected as an administrator to their organization by AARC Education staff prior to starting an application. Applicants can be an administrator for more than one organization (for example: their employer and their state society)

## Fees

A non-refundable fee is assessed for reviewing applications and maintaining records of programs. Fees may be paid with a credit card or check. The fee schedule is below.

FEE TABLE (effective October 1, 2018)

Type of Program	Not-for-profit*	For-profit
<b>Traditional (Provider-Directed)</b>		
First program date application fee	\$80	\$150
Subsequent program (repeat) dates	\$20	\$20
Late fee (applications received less than 31 days prior to the course delivery date)	\$40	\$40
<b>Non-traditional (Learner-Directed)</b>		
1 year accreditation application fee	\$80	\$150
Late fee (applications received less than 31 days prior to the course delivery date)	\$40	\$40

*\*Not-for-profit sponsors must provide their nine (9) digit federal tax ID number at the beginning of each application.*



### **Fees for AARC State Societies (Affiliates)**

Only provider-directed programs (traditional programs) sponsored by AARC State Societies are exempt from application fees. Fees for non-traditional program applications are not waived. A late fee will be charged if the application is submitted within 31 days of the program date. Exempt programs include those in which the State Society assumes complete fiscal responsibility and access is available to all AARC members in the state. The AARC will make the final determination regarding waiving the fee.

### **Refunds**

Fees paid for application review are not refundable.

### **Check Return Fees**

A fee of \$125 will be assessed for each check returned from the bank for any reason.

### **Method of Payment**

Payment must be submitted with the application. Check, money order, and credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express) are accepted. Checks and money orders should be payable to the AARC and sent to the AARC office. Applications will not be reviewed until after payment has been received.

Check payments may be mailed along with the provided invoice to:

AARC  
Attn: CRCE  
9425 N MacArthur Blvd, Ste 100  
Irving, TX 75063

### **Length of Approval Period**

Traditional programs are accredited for one year from the date of the initial course offering.

Nontraditional programs may be approved for either one or two years. The period of accreditation begins on the date the course is first offered. The second year of accreditation may be requested after the application has been submitted or immediately following approval.

### **Program Integrity**

To ensure that all educational activities are free from bias, all presenters/authors must declare vested interests. Relationships include being an employee of, or a paid consultant to a medical equipment manufacturer or pharmaceutical company; serving on a speaker's bureau or having received any type of honoraria or paid expenses as a speaker by a medical equipment manufacturer or pharmaceutical company; receiving royalties from the sale of a book; holding a patent; or ownership interest. The online application system provides an area for the course sponsor to include the relationships held by each presenter/author. Failure to disclose these relationships may result in a rejection of the application.

In the event that any form of commercial support is provided for an educational activity, the course sponsor will maintain control of the educational content and disclose to the learners all financial relationships or lack of, between the commercial supporter and the course sponsor or presenters. Exhibitors who purchase exhibit space only are of no concern with regard to program integrity. No special notices of these exhibitors need be provided to the program participants. Specifically:

- Funds from a commercial source will be in the form of an unrestricted educational grant to the course sponsor of the educational activity and must be acknowledged in printed material and brochures.
- Learners must be made aware of the nature of commercial support of all educational sessions.
- Educational activities that present research conducted by commercial companies will be designed and presented with scientific objectivity.
- Learners will be informed of any off-label use of a commercial product that is presented in educational activities. Off-label use refers to using a pharmaceutical agent for a purpose other than the purpose for which it received FDA approval.
- AARC CRCE® approval status for an educational activity does not expressly or implicitly confer AARC endorsement of the activity's content.

## **Application Review**

After submission via the online application system, the course sponsor will receive email verification that the application has been received. The CRCE® administrator will assign the application to a reviewer. Applications will not be reviewed until fees are paid in full. During the review process, the course sponsor will be notified via email if additional information or clarification is necessary. After the review is completed, the course sponsor will receive an email with the final actions taken.

## **Actions Taken After the Review**

Following the review by the AARC, an activity is classified as Approved, Changes Required, or Not Approved.

- **Approved**  
If an application is approved, the course sponsor will receive notification that includes instructions, the approval number, and the number of contact hours. This notification is via email and will be sent as soon as the review process has been completed.
- **Changes Required**  
If an application requires additional information or clarification, the course sponsor will be notified via email. They may be asked to make specific changes, provide additional documentation, substitute presenters, or to remove sessions within an application that are not approved.
- **Denied**  
If an application is not approved, the AARC will provide an explanation in writing to the course sponsor.

## **Resubmission**

Applications previously not approved may be resubmitted as new applications. The requisite program review fees must accompany the program application and the original offering dates may have to be changed to allow time for normal review process.

## **Revocation**

Under circumstances where AARC has reasonable grounds to believe information has been falsified or misrepresented on an application, it may disapprove the application or revoke the approval if approval has already been given. Additionally, the AARC reserves the right to refuse to review applications submitted in the future by course sponsors who submit false documents or falsely advertise their courses as having been accredited by the AARC.

## **Changes to an Approved Activity**

If a significant change is made to the objectives, content and/or time frames of an approved educational activity, a new application must be submitted with the appropriate fees.

If a presenter/content specialist is changed but the educational activity maintains the same objectives, content, and time frames, the course sponsor need not submit a new application. Instead, the course sponsor must contact the AARC via email to report the change in activity.

## **Correct versus Incorrect Terminology Regarding AARC CRCE® Approved Continuing Education Activities**

When referring to Continuing Respiratory Care Education the term “contact hours”, not “CEU” (continuing education unit), must be used. CEU (10 contact hours) is a specific standard of educational achievement used to meet the criteria of the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET).

## **Advertising/Promotional Materials**

As part of the application process, the AARC must verify that the course/program is being promoted as described in the application. The applicant must provide any promotional materials used in the marketing of the course. These include flyers, brochures, memos, letters, email messages, and the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of all websites where the program is being promoted. These materials must be included with the application.

Before the program is approved for AARC CRCE®, the following language may be used on promotional materials:

“Application has been made to the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) for continuing education contact hours for respiratory therapists.”

After the program has received official approval for AARC CRCE®, the following language may be used on promotional materials:

“This program has been approved for XXXX contact hours Continuing Respiratory Care Education (CRCE) credit by the American Association for Respiratory Care, 9425, N. MacArthur Blvd, Suite 100, Irving TX 75063. Course # xxxxxxxxx”

### **Copyrighted Materials**

If copyrighted durable materials are to be a component of a non-traditional course, the sponsor must provide evidence that written permission has been obtained to use these materials. A copy of a letter provided by the publisher of the copyrighted materials will suffice as evidence. This letter must be included in the application.

### **Reporting Attendee Participation**

Using ONLY the Excel-based attendance form provided following approval, course sponsors must submit a report of all participants (both AARC members and non-members) who successfully complete the course. The report must be submitted after the program is completed. *Reports for traditional programs must be submitted within 30 days after the last day of the course.* For non-traditional courses that run continuously throughout the accreditation period, reports should be submitted periodically. However, no more than 2 months must elapse before the sponsor submits the required information for those who have successfully completed the course. Submitting every 30 days is recommended. This is necessary to facilitate the posting of contact hours earned on the web-based transcripts of AARC members who complete these sessions.

### **Course Certificates**

A certificate of completion containing specific information (identified in the application) must be provided to each participant who completed the course requirements. Typically this certificate is provided at the conclusion of the activity, but not later than 30 days after the conclusion of the activity. Non-traditional course certificates must state that the course is non-traditional.

### **Renewal of Approval**

Once the approval period expires, the application and supporting documents must be resubmitted as a new application. There is no special procedure for "renewals".

### **Sponsor Requirements**

The course sponsor requirements include:

- Assure that the program is conducted as described in the application materials.
- Maintain attendance rosters.
- Return the completed course roster to the AARC within 30 days following the completion of Traditional programs and reports at least every 60 days for Non-

traditional programs. Course logs must list all who earned CRCE®, not just AARC members.

- AARC member numbers must be provided for all participants who are AARC members.
- Assure that the participants are aware of any real or perceived conflicts of interest by presenters.
- Provide proof of completion to all who complete the requirements of the course.

### **Maintaining Records and Annual Audits**

The course sponsor is required to maintain a record that includes the number of CRCE® contact hours awarded to and completed post-course evaluations from each participant for five (5) years after the completion of the course. The course sponsor must maintain these records in a secure and confidential manner. These records include the complete application form and all supporting documentation, the completed course roster and post-course evaluations, and all correspondence regarding making necessary changes required for approval. Additionally, the course sponsor must be able to determine how confidential records are maintained and handled and which personnel have access to the records. Mechanisms must be in place for systematic, easy retrieval, retention, and disposal of information by authorized individuals.

The AARC will audit 1% of all approved CRCE® courses in December of the year the course was delivered for the required documents. The audit requires that the course sponsors provide proof of attendance documentation and post-course evaluations completed by course participants.