



CSSM® Certification: Eligibility and Maintenance Requirement Rationales

The CSSM® credential recognizes perioperative nurses who serve in leadership and management roles within surgical services. Eligibility criteria for both initial certification and recertification are grounded in national standards, expert input, and current healthcare practice trends. Two distinct eligibility pathways—one for CNOR-certified nurses and one for non-CNOR applicants—offer flexible but rigorous routes to credentialing. Below is a summary of these requirements and the rationale behind them.

Initial Certification

Two eligibility pathways are available depending on whether the applicant currently holds CNOR certification.

Pathway 1: CNOR-Certified Applicants

- Hold a current, unrestricted RN license

Confirms legal authority for independent nursing practice and completion of required education and NCLEX examination.

- Hold a BA/BS or higher (not required to be a BSN)

Demonstrates foundational leadership competencies in communication, systems thinking, and analysis—regardless of degree field.

- Minimum of 2 years and 2,400 hours of surgical services management experience

Ensures leadership readiness based on active engagement in surgical services operations, building on clinical knowledge verified by CNOR.

- Volunteer leadership experience may count

Recognizes unpaid roles that involve relevant management responsibilities.

- 30 contact hours or 60 professional development points earned in past 2 years

Confirms recent, focused education aligned to the CSSM® content domains. Academic coursework may also be submitted.

Pathway 2: Non-CNOR Applicants

- Hold a current, unrestricted RN license

Same rationale as above.

- Hold a BA/BS or higher (not required to be a BSN)

Same rationale as above.

- Minimum of 4 years and 4,800 hours of surgical services management experience

Ensures sufficient exposure to leadership, strategic planning, and perioperative operations in the absence of CNOR certification.

- Volunteer leadership experience may count

Same rationale as above.

- 50 contact hours or 100 professional development points earned in past 2 years

Ensures greater professional preparation for candidates without CNOR, compensating through higher education volume.

Recertification

- Hold an active CSSM® and RN license

Maintains credential validity and legal practice authority.

- Currently employed in surgical services management

Confirms active leadership engagement. Includes consultants, interim roles, and qualifying volunteer positions.

- At least 1,500 hours of management experience over 3 years

Accommodates managers in shared or part-time roles, such as those in rural or hybrid positions.

- Earn 200 points through professional development

Promotes continued learning and leadership advancement in surgical services.