



ABCERS CertLink® Assessment FAQ

In 2018, the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery (ABCERS) launched its MOC Continuing Certification Assessment, **CertLink**.

What is CertLink?

CertLink is an online platform which delivers Quarterly questions to ABCERS Diplomates in a longitudinal assessment as an alternative to the high-stakes 10-year MOC Examination. We anticipate a longitudinal assessment platform will foster growth in medical knowledge and professional development.

What is longitudinal assessment? Is there research to support this form of assessment?

Longitudinal assessments use frequent, smaller scale assessments, to help recognize deficiencies, and provide resources to guide comprehension, retention, and aid in the retrieval of information to apply in practice. This is especially useful for the physician community where there is a great need to identify and address knowledge gaps, access focused content, and relate subject matter to their specialties. There are numerous studies and literature to support the use of longitudinal assessments and contemporary adult learning theory. Two of such studies (focused on medical professionals and longitudinal assessments) follow below:

The 2013 study, "[Brain Science Provides New Approach to Patient Safety Training](#)," which found that in more than 16 randomized trials, physicians improved long-term knowledge retention by answering questions over spaced intervals of time;

"[Comparative Effects of Test-Enhanced Learning and Self-Explanation on Long-Term Retention](#)," which studied medical students, and found testing in combination with explaining the information is the most effective way to drive long-term retention of information.

When did Certlink start?

CertLink began July 2, 2018 and coincides with a five-year Continuing Certification Cycle. All diplomates who were certified after 1990 will be enrolled in CertLink by **2024** and be on a 5-year cycle.

ENROLLMENT

When do I enroll?

Newly Certified Diplomates will automatically be enrolled into CertLink, the January following certification. Diplomates who were certified prior to 2017 will be automatically enrolled according to timing of the last certification, as well as preference to enter CertLink sooner, ([See CertLink Grid](#)). Diplomates will continue under the current MOC platform and guidelines until entering CertLink. Please contact the ABCERS Board office at 734-282-9400 or CertLink@abcrs.org with any questions.

NOTE: It is imperative that your ABCERS Profile is up to date with your correct email address. This will be your main point of contact with CertLink and your future CertLink Username!

How do I login to the CertLink dashboard?

The CertLink secure online dashboard can be accessed via computer or tablet. *Please note it may be difficult to view images on a smaller device. It is advisable to tour the dashboard before answering questions to get a feel for the new environment.*

A welcome email will be sent with a link to reset your CertLink password. You will be directed to the dashboard login page. Your **email address** is your Username and you will use the **new password** you just created to sign in.

How much does it cost?

There is no additional fee for CertLink, it is included in the current ABCERS Continuing Certification Annual Fee. The Continuing Certification Annual fee remains at \$500 for Diplomates initially certified after 1990, and \$200 for those diplomates certified 1990 or prior who participate. Since the platform replaces the 10-year MOC Exam, the fees associated with the 10-year Exam will no longer be charged.

Are there incentives for participation?

The American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery offers up to 10 AMA PRA Category I CME Credits™ per year (40 total credits over a 5-year period) for successfully completing the Quarterly CertLink Assessment with a passing score of 70%. CME hours (2.5 per quarter) can be claimed annually, each January, after completion of the course evaluation.

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the joint providership of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons and the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. The American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons designates this enduring activity for a maximum of 10 AMA PRA Category I Credit(s)™. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Will I get a new certificate at the end of the pilot?

Each five-year cycle, upon completion of all requirements, Diplomates will be able to login to their ABCRS profile and go to the “Forms” section and download a certificate good for five years.

If I have a Lifetime Certificate and enroll in CertLink, will my Lifetime Certificate be replaced with a new certificate?

Diplomates who were certified 1990 or prior will always hold a Lifetime Certificate and participation in Continuing Certification and CertLink will continue to be voluntary. Diplomates may choose to participate for the continuing educational benefits and to fulfill the requirements of MOC.

QUESTION DELIVERY AND PLATFORM

Where do I answer my questions, track my progress?

The Diplomate answers questions on a personal dashboard after logging in at <https://abcrcs.mycertlink.org>. The dashboard is the “HOME” screen whenever logging in or ending a question cycle. It is made up of three sections with dashboard tools on the left-hand side and the upper right-hand side.

Tools



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Home FAQ Support Profile Notifications Readiness

REMINDER CertLink CMEs: Diplomates are eligible to receive up to 10 AMA PRA Category I CME Credits™ per year (40 total credits over a 5-year period) for successfully completing the Quarterly CertLink Assessment with a passing score of 70%. Diplomates are able to claim only the credits commensurate with the extent of participation in this activity (2.5 credits per each quarter successfully completed) and are required to complete an annual ABCRS Course Evaluation in order to claim the CME credits. Important Note: Diplomates will receive the Course Evaluation from ABCRS via email each January for the prior year assessments.

New! The AMA Center for Health Equity focuses on facilitating, strengthening, and amplifying AMA's work to eliminate health inequities. Education modules from the Center for Health Equity empower individuals and organizations, in health care and beyond, in advancing disparities and equity. Please see the Resources page for more info.

Community Comparison

Community Comparison shows how well others have done on the questions you have answered. Because questions are answered at different times, you may see these numbers fluctuate.

It is currently too early to display your comparison performance. This will display when more peer data becomes available.

Your Performance

0% Correct

- 16 Total Questions
- 0 Correct Questions Primary Questions
- 10 Incorrect Questions Primary Questions
- 0 Correct Questions Clone Questions
- 6 Incorrect Questions Clone Questions

Progress

This quarter's questions are traditional MULTIPLE-CHOICE

100%

Assessment Details

1. Community Comparison



- When enough peer data becomes available a comparison will show the Diplomat's score compared to the scores of other Diplomates who have already answered.

2. Your Performance



- As the Diplomat responds to questions this tile will update to display the Diplomat's performance to-date and what is left to do during the current Quarter.
- Launch the assessment here by clicking on the green button "Begin Assessment" which will open a new page.

3. Progress



- Shows how many questions remain in the current Quarter and how many days the Diplomat still has to complete the assessment.
- Select "Assessment Details" for a breakdown of the Assessment.



How many questions do I have to answer?

Each Quarter Diplomates will be given 10 - 16 questions to answer.

How often do I need to answer a question?

CertLink is flexible and allows Diplomates to answer the assessment questions at the pace they choose for themselves throughout the Quarter. All 10-16 questions will be available on day one of the Quarter. Diplomates may choose to answer all in one sitting or at his or her convenience until 11:59 pm EST the last day of the Quarter.

May I use the internet and other educational resources to answer questions?

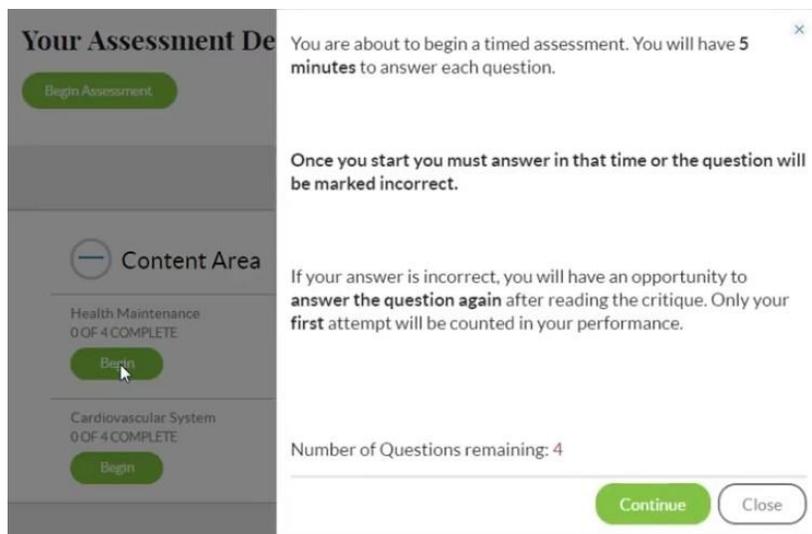
Yes, Diplomates may use educational resources as needed so long as the question is answered in the allotted time. Please remember, once the timer has started you cannot close out the session or the question will be scored as an incorrect response.

May I consult with my colleagues or peers while answering questions?

No. Assessment is considered an individual activity. As a member of ABCRS, Diplomates carry an obligation for ethical behavior and professionalism in all conduct.

How much time do I have to answer a question?

There are two types of assessments questions; Article Based Assessment questions and traditional multiple-choice questions. If you are scheduled for an Article Based Assessment, there is no time limit for reading the article and you can save the article for review offline. After reading the article you can answer the questions associated with the article. All Article Based Questions must be answered within 15 minutes of opening the question. The traditional multiple-choice questions must be answered within 5 minutes.



What happens if the timer runs out before I finish answering my question?

If the timer runs out, the question will be marked incorrect. Then there will be a second opportunity to answer after reading a critique. However, only the first attempt will be scored. A clone of this question may appear later. Your score on the clone question will replace your score from the first question.

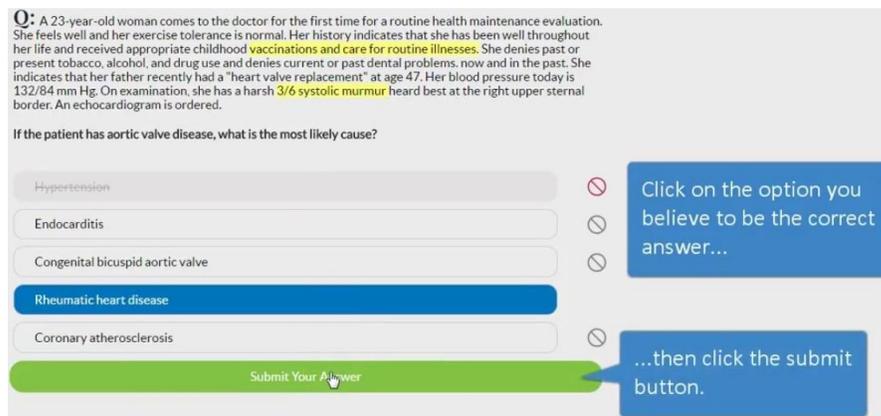
Can I skip or “pass” on a question and return to it later after I’ve opened it?

You may return to a question after you’ve opened it, but it must be answered within the question’s time limit (5 or 15 minutes). The timer will continue to run even if the question is closed, and it cannot be paused. The question will be marked incorrect if it is unanswered when the time expires. Once a Diplomate starts a question it must be answered in the allotted time or the question will be marked incorrect.

What types of questions will I receive?

Diplomates will receive article-based questions multiple-choice answer style and traditional multiple-choice answer style questions. The traditional multiple-choice answer style questions are presented in random order, and will represent the pillars of Colorectal Surgery including:

- Perioperative (Includes Endoscopy)
- Malignancy
- Anorectal Disease
- Benign Disease
- Pelvic Floor
- Miscellaneous



What tools are available?

There are four navigation menus, located at the top-left and top-right on the home page, and top-middle on the assessment and critique pages.

Top-Left Menu

- **DASHBOARD:** Clicking on DASHBOARD from other pages will return the Diplomate to the “Home” screen. The Diplomate may be asked to confirm this action depending on the page being left.
- **ASSESSMENT:** Directs the Diplomate to the Assessments Details Page.
- **QUESTION HISTORY:** Collection of critiques and references related to the questions the Diplomate has already answered. The actual questions will NOT be able to be viewed again, however the presented information can be used to assess knowledge gaps and support future learning.
- **RESOURCES:** Suggests additional educational resources. Here you also will find additional CME courses offered to you for free through the AMA (these courses are optional).



Assessment Page Menu

- **QUIT:** Quitting without submitting will score the question incorrect.
- **HIGHLIGHTER:** The Diplomate is able to select text within the question and highlight it during the allotted time.
- **CALCULATOR:** A scientific calculator is available if needed.
- **SCRATCHPAD:** Any note made on the scratchpad will only be available during the time allotted for the question. If a Diplomate would like to make a permanent note for later reference please use the NOTES section on the CRITIQUE screen after answering the question.



Critique Page Menu

- **DASHBOARD:** Clicking on DASHBOARD from other pages will return the Diplomate to the “Home” screen. The Diplomate may be asked to confirm this action depending on the page being left.
- **HIGHLIGHTER:** The Diplomate is able to select text within the question and highlight it during the allotted time.
- **FAVORITE:** Tag a question to view its key learning point and critique in Question History.
- **FEEDBACK:** This is the specified place Diplomates have to provide feedback to ABCRS about specific questions. It is ONLY available on the Critique page.
- **NOTES:** Enter and save thoughts about a question for viewing later in Question History.

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Top-Right Menu

NEED HELP: You can request support in the platform by clicking “Support” in the upper right menu or send an email to abcrs@mycertlink.org. If needed, an ABCRS CertLink support agent will follow-up with you as soon as possible. ABCRS office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Eastern Time.

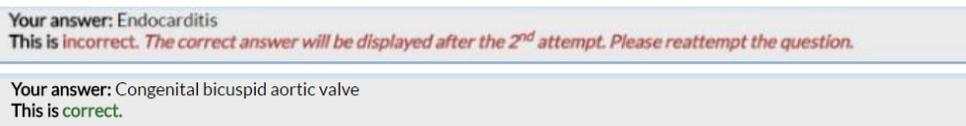
NOTE: Please **DO NOT LEAVE FEEDBACK REGARDING QUESTIONS IN SUPPORT TICKETS!** If a Diplomate has a question or concern about a specific question it should be offered in the Critique section by clicking on the “Feedback” tool.

- **MESSAGES:** Link to CertLink notifications and emails.
- **MY ACCOUNT:** Displays important information related to the Diplomate’s account. Certain fields are available to update while others require contacting ABCRS to update.
- **SIGN OUT:** Click here when ready to securely exit the platform.

TRACKING PROGRESS AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK FROM CERTLINK

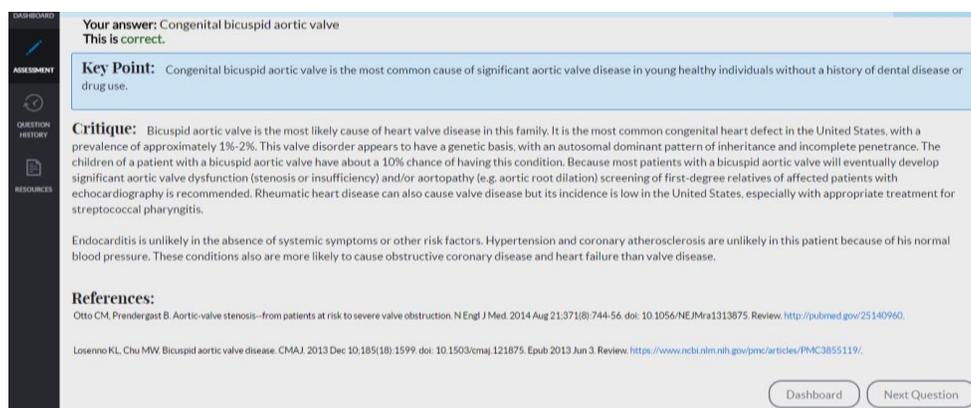
How will I know if I answered my questions correctly or incorrectly?

The Diplomate will see the answer chosen and the correct answer. If answered incorrectly, a second attempt is provided with the correct answer displayed after the second response.



What type of immediate feedback will I receive in regard to my performance after I answer a question?

The Diplomate will receive a Critique that explains the correct answer, the Key Point, and References (see below). The Diplomate can also track progress on his or her personal Dashboard at any time. (Please see *Community Comparison and Your Performance*).



Does the system allow special accommodations?

Diplomates with special needs will be accommodated. Please submit all paperwork to the Board Office a minimum of 90 days before the start of a new Quarter in order to receive the appropriate accommodations required.

What happens if I have a life emergency or have need of a long-term break?

A total of 16 quarters of questions will be answered with continuous participation. The fifth year of the cycle can be a year free of questions, or used to extend the cycle if life events intervene. ABCRS understands that our Diplomates are people with busy lives and unexpected things happen. CertLink is designed for flexibility for life emergencies, life events, and long-term breaks. ABCRS must be contacted in writing for any requested time away from the program.

How can I provide feedback or dispute a question on CertLink to ABCRS?

Diplomates have an opportunity to provide feedback on each question after submitting the answer and reading the critique. At the top of the screen click on the “FEEDBACK” tool button and this will allow you to share your thoughts with the Board.



What type of messages will I receive from the system?

CertLink will periodically send out automated reminders in MESSAGES located on the top-right, as well as to each Diplomate's designated email address. It will inform Diplomates on how many questions are left to complete, due date, where they can access the questions, and to whom they can direct any questions. (See sample Quarter Reminder)

Dear Dr. <Last Name>,

The segment is nearly over and our system shows you still have unanswered CertLink questions. Please sign in at <https://abcrcs.mycertlink.org> to answer your questions by 11:59pm EST on <Segment End Date>. **Note: Any questions remaining unanswered after this date will be recorded as incorrect.**

Days remaining: <Days Remaining>

Questions remaining: <Items Remaining>

Please email abcrcs@mycertlink.org with any questions or issues.

Regards,

The American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery

What is considered successful participation and a passing score?

Diplomates will be enrolled into a five-year Continuing Certification CertLink cycle. Successful participation requires Diplomates to answer 16 quarters with a score of 70% over the five-year cycle. Successful participation, also includes keeping up with the other parts of Continuing Certification which together will maintain Diplomates' Board Certification.

In addition to the Continuing Certification **Annual Fee**, each Diplomate must also complete the following requirements **once every 5 years**:

Continuing Certification Requirements

Part I: Professional Standing

- **Verification of Full Licensure** - Submit a copy of your medical license to the board office.
- **Chief of Staff Evaluation and Documentation of Hospital Privileges** – Combined form is located inside of your MOC/Continuing Certification tab. Print, and have your Chief of Staff or Chief of Surgery sign and mail/fax/email to the Board office.

Part II: Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Requirements

- **The 40 Self-Assessment CME requirement is waived with your successful participation in CertLink®.** However, you will need to document completion of 40 general CME hours within the 5-year certification period.
- The American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery offers up to 10 *AMA PRA Category I CME Credits™* per year (40 total credits over a 5-year period) for successfully completing the Quarterly CertLink Assessment with a passing score of 70%. CME hours (2.5 per quarter) can be claimed annually, each January, after completion of the course evaluation.

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Part IV: Evaluation of Performance in Practice

- Part IV of ABCRS MOC requires ongoing participation in a local, regional or national outcomes registry

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Holders of Multiple Certificates and Reciprocity

Diplomates with certificates held by **any** other American Board of Medical Specialties Board, who are participating in Continuing Certification program, or an ABS MOC or a RCPSC MOC program, can be granted reciprocity towards meeting the Continuing Certification Requirements, Parts I, II and IV. Diplomates must report additional certifications to the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. ABCRS is not a sub-specialty of ABS or RCPSC and **does not have automatic data transfer with any Board** at this time.

What happens if I don't achieve a passing score and I am participating?

If the Diplomate is participating but the performance is below 70% correct after two years, s/he will receive an email notifying them of their performance. If a passing score is not achieved by the end of the fourth year, the Diplomate will be required to answer questions **in the fifth year of the cycle** to achieve 70% correct of 16 quarters of questions. If the Diplomate fails to achieve this goal, a re-entry pathway may be required.

How should I prepare to take the assessment through CertLink?

No preparation or study guides are necessary. CertLink and its longitudinal assessment model are part of a process to maintain “walking around knowledge” as well as gain new knowledge, and discover knowledge gaps and areas of weakness. Seeing these questions repeated with slight variations over the Quarters has been shown to be one of the best methods for retaining information. However, should a diplomate choose to access study materials, the CertLink dashboard landing page contains a link labeled “Resources” with best suggested colorectal surgery study materials.

How do I receive support on the dashboard?

You can request support in the platform by clicking “Support” in the upper right menu or send an email to abcrc@mycertlink.org. If needed, an ABCRS CertLink support agent will follow-up with you as soon as possible. ABCRS office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Eastern Time.

What other ABMS Member Boards are using CertLink?

A number of ABMS Member Boards are exploring the idea of, or actively conducting, pilots to evaluate longitudinal assessment. The ABMS Member Boards participating in CertLink pilots include:

- *Nuclear Medicine*
- *Otolaryngology*
- *Dermatology*
- *Pathology*
- *Medical Genetics and Genomics*
- *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*

Contact information

If you have any questions please contact Sherry Whitenburg, Continuing Certification Coordinator at ABCRS CertLink@ABCRC.org or 734-282-9400 between 8:30 am – 4:30 pm EST Monday - Friday.

(PLEASE NOTE: User Support Tickets MUST be generated in the “SUPPORT” section of the Dashboard and NOT sent to CertLink@ABCRC.org)