Important Announcement about the VCS System

Dear colleague,

We are writing to share important news about ABAI's Verified Course Sequence (VCS[1]) system. As you may know, the BACB and ABAI entered into an agreement on November 21, 2017 to transfer the management of the VCS system from the BACB to ABAI. The original contract period ends on December 31, 2025. The VCS system was originally developed by the BACB to expedite the processing of BCBA and BCaBA certification applications and that has remained its core purpose. However, as a secondary function, the VCS system has also been a way to identify training programs that offer a formal curriculum in behavior analysis.

Two recent developments have led to an important decision about the VCS system. The first, announced in the fall of 2021 by the BACB, provides an option for VCS coordinators to attest to an applicant's fulfillment of coursework requirements, bypassing the typical, course-by-course review process; a process that has become cumbersome to applicants and VCS coordinators due to the large number of training programs, the large number of within-university program variations, and different eras of coursework. The new attestation model procedurally aligns with the BACB's Supervised Fieldwork Verification process and is a conventional practice in the certification industry. The new process has been successful for those who have used it and the BACB is continuing to work with university programs to identify further improvements and enhancements.

The second recent development was ABAI's new Tiered Model of Education, which provides recognition of quality academic training programs and encourages programs to achieve accreditation progressively. The Tiered Model includes four tiers based on whether the training program is housed in an institution of higher education, is degree granting, and incorporates experiential learning. Tier 1 programs are ABAI-accredited. Tiers 2a and 2b are recognized degree-granting programs from higher education institutions that are close to meeting the accreditation standards. Tiers 3a and 3b are recognized non-degree programs (e.g., certificate and post-graduate programs). Tiers 4a and 4b are recognized non-degree programs not connected to institutions of higher education and are only available for training programs outside the United States. ABAI hopes to provide recognition to sound programs in any tier and progressively encourage and assist those programs to move toward accreditation. ABAI encourages all existing VCS programs to review the Tiered Model of Education system and standards. The Tiered Model consists of a comprehensive evaluation of the program consistent with ABAI accreditation, which includes the fulfillment of nine standard areas related to public disclosure, accountability, structure, resources, and curriculum. Details of the Tiered Model of Education are available here.

These two developments mean that both functions of the VCS system—expediting certification-application processing and identifying training programs—can now be accomplished in other

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[1] ABAI has two VCS systems: the original version designed to convey BCBA and BCaBA coursework and a newer version designed to convey coursework in culturo-behavior science, now called the culturo-behavior science concentration. In this communication, we use "VCS system" only to refer to the BCBA and BCaBA coursework version.

ways. Thus, ABAI will not be renewing the VCS transfer agreement after its expiration on December 31, 2025, and the BACB will not reassume the system after that date. Thus, the VCS system will end on December 31, 2025. After that date, all BCBA and BCaBA certification applications (under Pathway 2) will be processed using the attestation process described above.

The timeline for upcoming changes is as follows:
1. January 1, 2025: ABAI will stop accepting new Fifth Edition BACB VCS applications.
2. July 1, 2024: ABAI will begin a modified renewal schedule and prorated rate for renewals through December 31, 2025.
3. July 1, 2025: ABAI no longer processes renewals.
4. December 31, 2025: This will be the last day for applicants to apply for BCBA or BCaBA certification (under Pathway 2) using course-by-course review via VCS records.
5. January 1, 2026: All BCBA and BCaBA applicants (under Pathway 2) will complete their certification application using the coursework attestation process.

ABAI will continue to work with programs during this transitional period to ensure their graduates remain eligible for BACB certification. Both ABAI and the BACB will continue to work closely during the upcoming transitions to further support our constituencies and the discipline.

We prepared a list of questions and answers below. Please do not hesitate to contact ABAI (VCS@abainternational.org) for any matter regarding the education programs, and the BACB through the VCS Coordinator Support Form for questions regarding certification eligibility requirements.

VCS Sunsetting Questions & Answers

Q: What will happen to programs that have a Verified Course Sequence (VCS) but are not yet or do not plan to become an ABAI accredited (Tier 1) or recognized (Tier 2) program as of January 1, 2026?

A: Programs not yet ready for recognition or accreditation may still produce eligible candidates for BCBA and BCaBA certification applications. Each university program that meets the BCBA or BCaBA Pathway 2 coursework requirements will use the attestation system to convey that their students meet said coursework requirements. We are announcing this change well in advance of January 1, 2026, so that the BACB has time to work with VCS Coordinators and other program representatives to help ensure the success of the attestation system. Then, as outlined in the BACB's March 2022 Newsletter, beginning January 1, 2032, Pathway 1, which will consist of an ABAI-Accredited Degree Program (and practical fieldwork) will be the only eligibility pathway for BCBA-level certification.

Q: How will this impact students who are enrolled in my VCS program?

A: If your program meets the BCBA or BCaBA Pathway 2 coursework requirements, this change will not impact your students. Your students can still apply for BCBA or BCaBA

certification. The only difference is that those who apply on or after January 1, 2026, must have the university contact attest that they meet all coursework requirements.

Q: What will happen to ABAI-accredited degree programs that have a VCS embedded within them?

A: If your degree program is ABAI accredited, it will not be affected by this change regardless of whether it has a VCS embedded within it. When students graduate from your ABAI-accredited program, they will apply for BCBA or BCaBA certification under Pathway 1 as usual. However, if your ABAI-accredited program has a companion (non-degree or non-accredited) program that is structured to meet the BCBA or BCaBA Pathway 2 coursework requirements, students completing that coursework must have the university contact attest that they meet all coursework requirements beginning January 1, 2026.

Q: Will ABAI remove all VCS programs from the VCS Directory on January 1, 2026?

A: Yes. ABAI will maintain the directory of current, active VCSs through December 31, 2025. On January 1, 2026, ABAI will retire the VCS Directory.

Q: Do I need to keep my VCS active and updated until January 1, 2026 by renewing it?

A: If you want your students to be able to apply for BCBA or BCaBA certification under Pathway 2 using course-by-course review through December 31, 2025, you should keep your VCS(s) active and updated, renew, and maintain accurate verified course records with ABAI per usual. Beginning July 1, 2025, ABAI will no longer process course changes for VCSs, and the current VCS Database will be retired. From that point forward, the attestation system will be used for all BCBA and BCaBA Pathway 2 applications. Through December 31, 2025, VCS Coordinators should continue to email VCS@abainternational.org for support regarding the maintenance of their VCS(s).

Q: How can I update my VCS to meet the BACB's 2027 coursework requirements?

A: The VCS system remains in place for the current, Fifth Edition coursework requirements, and updates or modifications to those sequences will continue to be supported. There will not be a separate or new VCS application system for the BACB's 2027 Pathway 2 coursework requirements as the VCS system will no longer exist. We recommend programs planning to meet the BACB's 2027 requirements, with graduates eligible via Pathway 2, document their coursework details internally in preparation for the BACB's Coursework Attestation system. Programs applying for the Tiered Model will continue to work with ABAI.

Q: How should we advertise our coursework to prospective students?

A: If you maintain an active VCS through 2025, you may continue to use the language provided by ABAI as indicated in the renewal letter, "The Association for Behavior Analysis International has verified the following courses toward the coursework requirements for eligibility to take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® or Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst®

examination. Applicants will need to meet additional requirements before they can be deemed eligible to take the examination." Effective January 1, 2026, training programs offering coursework to meet the BCBA and BCaBA Pathway 2 requirements must update the language to remove reference to ABAI's verification and instead, once enrolled in the attestation process may state "This program has been designed to meet the [*BACB Certification Type]* Pathway 2 coursework requirements. Applicants will need to meet additional requirements to qualify for [*BACB Certification Type*]." You may incorporate this revised language for communications and prospective students who may apply for certification after January 1, 2026. ABAI-accredited and recognized programs can incorporate, more specific language about their accreditation and recognition status (as indicated by ABAI).