



# General Education Guidelines

*For individuals interested in becoming International Board Certified Lactation Consultants®*

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Planning for the General Education Courses .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Health Professional Exemption .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Required Subjects .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Description of Courses .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>HIGHER EDUCATION SUBJECTS</b>	
<i>Biology.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Human Anatomy &amp; Physiology.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Nutrition .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Psychology or Counseling or Communication Skills.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Introduction to Research.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Sociology or Cultural Sensitivity or Cultural Anthropology.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>CONTINUING EDUCATION TOPICS</b>	
<i>Basic life support (e.g. CPR).....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Medical documentation .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Medical terminology .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Occupational safety and security for health professionals .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Professional ethics for health professionals (e.g. Code of Professional Conduct) .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Universal safety precautions and infection control.....</i>	<i>9</i>

## Introduction

All first-time candidates for the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE) certification exam must demonstrate completion of education in 14 subjects that are typical of the education required of health professionals. This general education must be completed **prior** to applying for the exam.

The rationale for requiring all exam candidates to complete education in these subjects is to prepare prospective IBCLCs for having the ability to apply learning to complex problems and the knowledge necessary to function as valued, respected members of the maternal-child health care team.

These guidelines are provided so that individuals who want to earn the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC) credential can determine whether coursework they have already completed or coursework in which they are planning to enroll will satisfy the General Education in the Health Sciences exam eligibility requirement. If additional assistance is needed to make these determinations, interested individuals should share these guidelines with their college/university counselor. IBLCE staff will not review transcripts prior to submission of the exam application; it is the responsibility of each exam candidate to seek assistance from their institution of higher learning to determine whether or not their education fulfills the General Education in the Health Sciences requirements.

### Please Note:

- If you are one of the health professionals on the List of Recognized Health Professions, you are exempt from this requirement. IBLCE considers that your professional education satisfies the General Education requirements.
  - ❖ When you apply for the exam, you will be asked to provide documentation of your health professional status, e.g. a copy of your license, registration, diploma or transcript.
  - ❖ For more information about professionals who are exempt, see the Health Professional Exemption section on page 3 of this guide.
- Higher education refers to education acquired after completion of compulsory education. It is typically provided at academies, universities, colleges, vocational schools, institutes of technology, trade schools and career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certifications.
  - ❖ The definition of compulsory education will vary from country to country.
- To demonstrate completion of these general education requirements, candidates whose applications are chosen for audit will be required to provide transcripts or certificates of completion for courses in the required subjects.
- Completion of coursework in these 14 subjects, combined with the 90 hours of required education in human lactation and breastfeeding, is roughly equivalent to three years of higher education.
- The general education requirements may be completed prior to or concurrent with the other exam eligibility requirements.
  - ❖ **Please Note:** The General Education in the Health Sciences courses must be completed prior to applying for the IBLCE exam.

## Planning for the General Education Courses

In order to complete the general education requirements, it may be necessary for you to return to your studies. For this reason, you may be wondering if the higher education coursework that you have already completed will meet the general education requirements. Or, maybe you are preparing to enroll in courses and need some guidance about which ones to take.

Undoubtedly, you will want to finish the required education in as short a time as possible while, at the same time, minimizing your cost. This guide is intended to help you determine whether or not courses that you have previously completed or courses in which you are planning to enroll will meet the general education requirements.

- For each subject listed in the General Education requirements, IBLCE expects that the exam candidate will complete basic education in each topic.
  - Advanced education will be accepted; however advanced coursework is not required.

- Coursework that is specifically designed to focus on the subjects as they relate to human breastfeeding and lactation is NOT required.
  - Such coursework will, of course, be accepted but is not required for the General Education requirements.
  - For example, you do not need to take a nutrition course that is specifically designed to discuss nutrition and human lactation; however, such a course will satisfy the nutrition requirement.
- Some courses will meet more than one General Education requirement.
  - Please see the course descriptions for more information.
- If you took courses in secondary school that were designed to be used for college/university credit (sometimes called advanced placement courses), you may be able to use them toward meeting the General Education requirements. **Please Note:** This option may not be available worldwide.
  - You will be required to provide a secondary school transcript that verifies completion of such courses with a passing grade.
- The College Level Examination Program (CLEP®) will allow you to receive credit for knowledge that you gained through independent study.
  - CLEP transcripts will be accepted as credit for any of the CLEP exams that you pass.
  - For more information, visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/about.html>
  - **Please Note:** This option is primarily available to applicants living in the United States.
- DSST® exams will also allow you to receive credit for knowledge that you gained through independent study.
  - DSST transcripts will be accepted as credit for any of the DSST exams that you pass.
  - For more information, visit <http://www.getcollegecredit.com/>
  - **Please Note:** This option is primarily available to applicants living in the United States.
- To help you fit these general education courses into your schedule, you may take courses online and through other means of distance learning. **Please Note:** Online and distance learning courses may not be available in all countries.

## Health Professional Exemption

In order to be exempt from the general education requirements, your profession must be on the [List of Recognized Health Professions](#). A copy of your current valid license or registration or a copy of your diploma or transcript showing completion of studies in your profession will be sufficient evidence for the exemption.

## Required Subjects

The General Education in the Health Sciences requirement includes 14 courses: 8 higher education subjects and 6 continuing education topics. IBLCE has identified 8 subjects in which all first-time exam candidates must complete at least one course, which is at least one academic credit term in length, of higher education from an accredited school. You must have received a final passing grade in each course.

**Please Note:** The names given to academic terms vary and depend upon how the institution of higher learning divides the academic year.

- Semester is one of two divisions of an academic year that are typically 16-18 weeks long.
- Trimester is one of 3 divisions of an academic year that are typically 14-16 weeks long.
- Quarter is one of 4 divisions of an academic year that are typically about 12 weeks long.
- Mini-mester is a term used to describe an intensive of study period between semesters through which students may earn the same credit they would earn during a regular semester.

Regardless of the terminology used by an academic institution, candidates must receive a final passing grade in each of the higher education courses in the health sciences.

Higher education refers to education acquired after completion of compulsory education. It is typically provided at academies, universities, colleges, vocational schools, institutes of technology, trade schools and career colleges

that award academic degrees or professional certifications. The definition of compulsory education will vary from country to country.

A transcript, preferably an official transcript, showing the name of the school, course name and a passing grade will document completion of study in the following higher education subjects:

- Biology
- Human Anatomy
- Human Physiology
- Infant and Child Growth and Development
- Nutrition
- Psychology or Counseling or Communication Skills
- Introduction to Research
- Sociology or Cultural Sensitivity or Cultural Anthropology

In addition, all first-time candidates must complete continuing education in 6 subjects that health professionals typically study as part of their professional education and/or are required for ongoing maintenance of their professional credentials:

- Basic life support (e.g. CPR)
- Medical documentation
- Medical terminology
- Occupational safety, including security, for health professionals
- Professional ethics for health professionals (e.g. Code of Ethics)
- Universal safety precautions and infection control

Education in these 6 subjects may be completed through continuing education courses or by taking a college or university course. A certificate of completion for continuing education or an unofficial transcript will satisfy documentation requirements. IBLCE does not require that these continuing education courses be obtained from any particular education provider or be of any specified length.

## Description of Courses

The following descriptions are provided as a guide to help you determine whether coursework that you have completed or coursework in which you plan to enroll will meet the general education requirements. The courses listed are examples of the type of education that is expected in each subject. The lists are not exhaustive.

### HIGHER EDUCATION (8) SUBJECTS

#### Biology

Candidates are expected to complete an introductory course of study in the growth, structure and function of living organisms. The following table provides typical names and descriptions for courses that will satisfy the Biology requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Introductory Biology	Survey course suitable for any major. Topics include animal (including human) structure, function, homeostatic mechanisms, organ systems, behavior, higher plant systems, and major concepts in ecology.
General Biology	An introduction to the principles of biological science. Will cover the cell from its chemical composition, structure, and function to the nature of information coding and transmission. This course also surveys the major phyla of animals, plants and fungi. Covers broad principles of cell biology, genetics, and evolution; physiology, ecology, and population dynamics of plant and animal systems.

Fundamentals of Biology	An introduction to the principles of biological science. Will cover the cell from its chemical composition, structure, and function to the nature of information coding and transmission. This course also surveys the major phyla of animals, plants and fungi.
Zoology	A survey of the animal kingdom emphasizing evolutionary relationships, structure and function, representative forms, adaptations, ecology, and behavior of invertebrates and vertebrates.
IBLCE will also accept coursework in cell biology, genetics, microbiology, immunology and other sub-categories of the biological sciences. If accompanied by study of human anatomy and physiology, IBLCE will accept coursework in botany.	

### Human Anatomy & Physiology

A basic course of study in the structure of human body systems is required. In addition, an introductory course in the physiology and function of human organ systems is required.

- Study in both human anatomy and human physiology is required. Courses without an associated laboratory component are satisfactory.
- Some schools combine these 2 subjects into one course. Such courses will satisfy the IBLCE requirement for both anatomy and physiology.

The table below describes typical courses that will meet the human anatomy and physiology requirements.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Fundamentals of Human Anatomy	Introduction to the gross anatomy of the human body. Covers the spatial arrangement and appearance of structures throughout the body, including visual identification of these structures. Musculoskeletal relationships, and the anatomy of major organ systems, are emphasized. <b>(Meets the anatomy requirement only.)</b>
Principles of Human Physiology	An introduction to the physiological and biochemical processes and general physiological principles necessary to sustain life. Organ and organ system processes are emphasized. Intended for students majoring in allied health or sports related curricula who require a course in human physiology. <b>(Meets the physiology requirement only.)</b>
Human Biology	The principles of biology with particular reference to the human body (anatomy and physiology). Laboratories include selected experiments on organ physiology and general anatomy. <b>(Meets both the anatomy and physiology requirements.)</b>
Fundamentals of Human Anatomy & Physiology	Course covers the basics of human anatomy and principles of physiology. Some knowledge necessary in basic biology, chemistry, and cell structure and function. <b>(Meets both the anatomy and physiology requirements.)</b>

### Infant and Child Growth and Development

IBLCEs need to understand and recognize the developmental milestones for infants and young children. These milestones include developmental changes in the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, movement, hearing, vision and language skills normally expected of infants and young children.

- Although coursework in the development of humans across the life span will be accepted, aspiring IBLCEs are encouraged to take courses that focus on the development of children from pregnancy through early childhood.
- Some courses, such as developmental psychology, may be used to meet both the Infant and Child Growth and Development and the Psychology requirement.

The table below describes typical courses that meet the infant and child growth and development requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Child Growth and Development	Human growth and development of the child from pregnancy through school-age. The patterns of growth include cognitive, physical, social, spiritual and emotional development with emphasis on cognitive thinking.
Childhood Growth and Development	A study of the physical, emotional, social and cognitive factors of growth and development of children birth through adolescence. Topics covered include principles, stages and theories of growth and development.
Early Childhood Development	This course is the study of the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional developmental processes of children from conception to age eight. Emphasis is twofold: on understanding the sequential dynamics of growth, development, behavior and understanding the uniqueness of each child.
Development of Infants and Toddlers	Major theories of psychosocial development are presented. Personality is traced from birth through age three. Sensorimotor developmental patterns are presented. The interrelated nature of development and the characteristics of and influence of disabilities and risk factors on development are studied.
Introduction to Child Psychology	This course provides an introduction to psychological development from birth through adolescence. The nature of changes during infancy, childhood, and adolescence, as well as the methods of study and theorizing about development are discussed. <b>(Meets both the infant and child growth and development and the psychology requirements.)</b>
Human Growth and Development	This course is an introduction to the study of the process of human development from conception to old age. Through a range of theories, the periods of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are examined with particular attention to the role of culture and genetics. <b>(Meet the requirement if supplemented with independent study of young children.)</b>
Developmental Psychology	The developmental psychology curriculum examines the changes in personality, cognitive ability and behavior throughout the lifespan. Therefore, in addition to preparing themselves for a rewarding career, students enrolled in developmental psychology curricula will also learn and understand more about themselves as they study the scientific conclusions made by experts in the field. <b>(Meets both the infant and child growth and development and the psychology requirements.)</b>

## Nutrition

An introductory course in nutritional science is required. Such courses might include Introduction to the elements of nutrition with emphasis on nutrition for humans; examination of food stuffs and nutritional quality; and physiology of food utilization.

The table below describes typical courses that meet the nutrition requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Introduction to Nutrition	Introduction to the elements of nutrition with emphasis on nutrition for humans; examination of food stuffs and nutritional quality, physiology of food utilization, food quality regulations, and the global ecology of food production.
Principles of Nutrition and Health	This course will provide an introduction to the basic principles of nutrition, with an emphasis on application of these principles to improve overall health. Topics include: guidelines for a balanced diet, index of nutritional quality, energy requirements and balance, weight management and obesity, nutritional quackery, sports nutrition, nutrition for children and elderly, and eating disorders.

Biology of Human Nutrition	A comprehensive introduction to human nutrition, focusing on the anatomical, biochemical, and physiological aspects of nutrition. The essential nutrients and their role in human metabolism are covered in detail, and the course's systemic approach places a strong emphasis on integration of metabolism. Discussion sections focus on applied aspects of human nutrition, including dietary assessment.
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### **Psychology or Counseling or Communication Skills**

Lactation consulting is a counseling profession and much of the work that IBCLCs do involves active listening and collaborative problem-solving skills. IBCLCs need a thorough understanding of human personality development and the principles of effective interpersonal communication.

- An introductory course in psychology will satisfy this requirement.
- In addition, courses in counseling and communication skills may be used to meet this requirement.
- Courses in public speaking/communication do **not** meet this requirement.

The table below describes typical courses that meet the psychology or counseling or communication skills requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Basic Concepts in Psychology	Introduces psychology as scientific discipline. Examines concepts and methods in learning, motivation, development, personality, and measurement.
Introduction to Psychology	A general survey of selected content areas in psychology, including personality and human development, physiological psychology, learning, intelligence, heredity and environment, and motivation and emotion.
Applied Psychology	Overview of behavioral principles, strategies, and system approaches to individual, organizational, and community change.
Foundations of Interpersonal Communication	Theories and principles of interpersonal communication emphasizing models of communication, verbal and nonverbal message systems, and analysis of communicative relationships.
Health Communication	Examines interpersonal communicative processes associated with health in consumer-provider, family, and health communication campaign contexts. Particular attention to understanding cultural differences in perceptions of and communication about health and disease.
Consumer-Provider Health Communication	Explores relational health communication research and practice. Examines the role of interpersonal communication in health care delivery, health promotion, disease prevention, risk communication, as well as in promoting personal and psychosocial well being.

### **Introduction to Research**

IBCLCs are expected to be informed about the research findings in the field of human lactation and breastfeeding. Critical reading skills are needed, as well as a good understanding of basic research methodology and statistics.

- A basic course is expected; one that is specifically about human lactation is not required.
- An introductory course in statistics is a reliable way to satisfy this requirement.
- Courses that focus on research outside the health sciences will not be accepted. For example, a research course that focuses on English literature, economics, marketing and/or legal research will **not** meet this requirement.

The table below describes typical courses that meet the introduction to research requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Introductory Statistics	Elementary introduction to statistics. Topics include descriptive statistics, probability, and estimation and hypothesis testing for means and proportions.
Public Health Research and Methods	This introductory research course is designed to present basic concepts and methods of public health research. Emphasis is placed on critique and use of current community and public health research methods.
Introduction to Critical Inquiry and Research	Introduction to fundamental theories, concepts, evidence, and competencies pertaining to scientific inquiry, evidence-based and informed practice, and research utilization in health care.
Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research	This course will cover topics related to the responsible conduct of research such as conflicts of interest, responsible authorship, policies regarding the use of human and animal subjects, handling misconduct, proper data management, research funding rules and procedures. Students will review and present case studies for class discussion.
Statistics for Health Professionals	This course focuses on basic concepts of statistics such as measures of central tendency and variability; concepts of test validity, reliability, and objectivity; and on basic techniques used in inferential statistics. Emphasis will be placed on interpreting scientific peer-reviewed research.
Health Sciences Research Methods	This course will cover: research study design, measures of disease occurrence and disease association, the different sources of error in observational research, a conceptual approach to multivariable analysis, principles of biostatistics, with special emphasis on means, proportion, regression coefficients and contingency tables. Also covered: analytic statistics and epidemiologic research methods.

### **Sociology or Cultural Sensitivity or Cultural Anthropology**

Due to global mobility, IBCLCs must have a broad understanding of sociological concepts and be sensitive to cultural differences worldwide. An introductory course in the sociological concepts and cultural aspects of human behavior is required. Courses in economics do **not** meet this requirement.

The table below describes typical courses that meet the sociology or cultural sensitivity or cultural anthropology requirement.

Typical Course Name	Typical Course Description
Introductory Sociology	Introduction to basic sociological concepts. Examines aspects of human behavior in cultural framework including: individual and group interaction, social mobility and stratification, status and class, race and gender relations, urbanism, crime and criminology, and social change and reform.
Elements of Sociology	The study of social life, including how human groups are organized, how they change, and how they influence individuals. Consideration is given to a variety of human organizations and social institutions and how these groups and institutions both determine, and are determined by, human beings.
Cultural Competency	Course is designed to provide a variety of experiences using various strategies to enhance the student's understanding of the impact of culture upon clients' perception of health and the delivery of care.
Communicating Across the Disciplines	Using case examples from recent and contemporary events, students will analyze data, assess alternative policy and program approaches, and evaluate the relative contributions of different disciplines and fields; including the way those disciplines and fields vary across different national traditions and between the national and international levels.

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology	An introduction to the anthropological study of cultures, based on ethnographic descriptions and analyses of tribal, developing, and modern state societies. The course explores a variety of concepts and approaches to the study of culture, and participants acquire experience in critical reading, critical thinking, and analytic writing.
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## **CONTINUING EDUCATION (6) TOPICS**

Education in the remaining subjects is most typically available as non-credit, continuing education courses. However, higher education courses in these subjects will also be accepted. The length of such courses will vary and IBLCE does not specify a certain number of hours of education in each topic. A short description of each subject is provided below.

### **Basic life support (e.g. CPR)**

A variety of basic life support courses such as Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Neonatal Pulmonary Resuscitation (NPR) will meet this requirement.

### **Medical documentation**

The ability to provide succinct, comprehensive records that accurately reflect the care provided to clients is an essential skill for IBCLCs.

### **Medical terminology**

In order to function as respected members of the health care team, IBCLCs must have a good understanding and use of basic medical terminology.

### **Occupational safety and security for health professionals**

It is important for IBCLCs to have training in personal safety and security measures such as how to avoid back injuries and latex allergies, as well as how to deal with violence and stress.

### **Professional ethics for health professionals (e.g. Code of Professional Conduct)**

An understanding of principles such as confidentiality, informed consent and conflict of interest is necessary to the ethical and professional conduct of IBCLCs.

### **Universal safety precautions and infection control**

IBCLCs must know how to protect themselves and patients/clients against exposure to disease and how to prevent spread of disease through effective sanitation measures.