

FAQs

Admissions

How are students selected for the Lactation courses in your program?

Our [Lactation Education courses](#) are open to all students who meet the prerequisites. All three IBLCE pathways require completion of 90 hrs of lactation education. We offer 100 hrs of lactation education. Students must either be an [IBLCE Recognized Health Professional](#) or have completed the [IBCLE Health Sciences Education requirements](#) in order to take our Lactation Education courses.

The [Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum](#) is a limited entry part of the program, and students must complete our Lactation Education courses before they can apply and be accepted. Applications are accepted once a year in the Spring term. The selection process includes an evaluation of the application and a personal interview for those who qualify. The evaluation of applicants is based on a competitive points system that includes meeting application requirements, prerequisite GPA, lactation education experience, and other criteria. Each application is evaluated and scored, then the top-scoring applicants are invited for a personal interview. See the our [web site](#) for more information or contact us at lactation@pdx.edu.

How long does it take to complete your Lactation coursework?

That depends upon what courses you take and what IBLCE Pathway you are using if you want to become an IBCLC. If you are seeking IBLCE certification and want to complete our Pathway 2 Program it will take 6 quarters over two academic years. See this [graphic](#) of the courses you need to complete and the timeline. Students who want to become an IBCLC and plan to use Pathway 1 or 3 may take less time or more time to complete the IBLCE certification requirements. Students using Pathway 1 or 3 will need to complete 3 quarters over one academic year if they choose to complete our Lactation Education courses (100 hrs). IBLCE requires that students complete their lactation education and lactation specific clinical experience within the 5 years prior to taking the IBLCE Exam.

How many students do you admit to the Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum each year?

The number of students we admit is dependent on the number of clinical sites and preceptors that are available. Once students have been accepted into the program, we maintain a waiting list to fill any vacancies that might occur. It is a competitive process, and only the students who have completed all the application requirements will be considered.

Do you accept students from outside the Portland OR area for the Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum?

Yes, first students must complete our Lactation Education courses. Then they can apply to our Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum. We have clinical experience sites all over Oregon and in some other states. If a student is from an area where we do not currently have any clinical sites, we encourage them to contact possible clinical sites to see if they would host a lactation student. The student can provide contact information for a possible clinical site and we will contact them to evaluate whether they meet our requirements for clinical experience. If they do, we can develop an educational affiliate agreement with them in order to place students at that site. We provide training and support for the clinical site and their preceptors.

How much does it cost to take the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health Lactation courses?

All of our courses are for academic college-credit so students pay tuition per college credit. On our [web page](#) scroll down to the **Tuition and Fees** section for more information.

How can I obtain breastfeeding education and experience before applying to the Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum?

We highly recommend students who plan to become IBCLCs first obtain experience working with breastfeeding families in a paid or volunteer role. If you have at least 6 months of personal breastfeeding experience, you could consider becoming a breastfeeding peer counselor. Here are links to two local volunteer breastfeeding peer counselor

organizations: <http://nursingmotherscounsel.org/> and <http://lalecheleagueoregon.webs.com/>

Some of the county WIC Programs also hire breastfeeding peer counselors. Consider contacting your local WIC office.

Some other ways to obtain experience include:

- 1) Consider becoming an active member of one of the local breastfeeding coalitions in your community.
- 2) Consider volunteering for [Northwest Mothers Milk Bank](#).
- 3) If you live in the Portland metro area, consider becoming a member of the [Oregon Washington Lactation Association](#) and attending their meetings where you will meet the local lactation community, learn more about breastfeeding, and hear about possible opportunities to volunteer. If you live elsewhere consider contacting a local lactation consultant, or use the following on-line directories to find lactation support organizations in your own area:

US Lactation Consultant Association – [directory of state and regional chapters](#)

La Leche League International – [directory of LLL groups by state in the US or in other countries](#)

Once I complete my Bachelor's degree will I be certified?

No. The final step in IBCLCE certification is applying for and passing the IBCLCE Exam. All students who successfully complete Lactation Education 1,2 and 3 and the Lactation Practicum will be eligible to apply for and take the IBCLCE exam to become an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). More details can be found on the [IBCLCE website](#).

Do I get paid for my clinical experience in the Lactation Practicum?

No. In the Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum your clinical hours are unpaid.

Jobs and Salary

Do I need to be a nurse to get a job working as a Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)?

No. IBCLCs work in a very wide variety of settings, and the job responsibilities dictate what other credentials are required. IBCLCs work in hospitals, public health departments, donor milk banks, WIC Programs, OB and pediatric clinics, as educators teaching breastfeeding classes and facilitating parenting support groups, in private practice, in community organizations that support parenting families, and teen parent programs. Some health organizations require that you are also an RN or RD because that job will require using those skills.

Consider where you think you want to work, and then do some networking interviews with IBCLCs who work in those settings. What credentials are required? What is the lactation work like in that setting? Is that what you want to do? If there is an opportunity to get volunteer experience in a setting you are considering, that can be a helpful experience.

How much is an IBCLC paid, and what are their typical work hours and work settings?

The pay range for IBCLCs varies based on their work setting and other job requirements. Estimated wages are \$30-\$60 per hours. Hours of work could be less than 8 hrs or may be 8-12 hr shifts. There are both

part-time and full-time job opportunities. IBCLCs work in hospitals, clinics, WIC programs, public health programs, parenting programs, private practice, donor milk banks, and educational settings.

Does PSU assist in job placement once students complete the Lactation Education courses and Lactation Practicum?

No, however PSU has an [Advising and Career Services office](#) which can assist students in sharpening their job hunting skills. We publicize job openings we are aware of through our Lactation email list.

Courses and Prerequisites

How do I know which classes to take to meet the IBLCE prerequisites?

Here is a [summary of the courses](#) that IBLCE requires. The prerequisite courses are defined by IBLCE, and more detailed information is provided in the [IBLCE Health Sciences Education Guidelines](#). We have listed the courses that PSU and PCC offer that meet these guidelines on our web site. If you have questions about whether specific courses offered elsewhere meet the IBLCE guidelines, you can contact us for [Advising](#). IBLCE evaluates each application for the exam and makes the final decision about whether each applicant's coursework meets their requirements.

How do I know which lactation courses I should take?

Our [Lactation Education Courses](#) are appropriate for students who plan to provide breastfeeding support, and for all those who are seeking IBLCE certification since all three certification pathways require 90-hours of Lactation Education.

If you plan to apply for our [Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum](#), you must complete your lactation education courses through our program. If you are unsure which [IBLCE Pathway](#) you plan to use to obtain clinical experience and become an IBCLC, our lactation education courses area appropriate for all three pathways.

Our [Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum](#) provides lactation specific clinical experience for a limited number of students. It is a limited entry part of our program and students will need to complete all the IBLCE Health Science Education requirements and Lactation Education 1, 2, and 3 before they are eligible to apply. This practicum is appropriate for students who are NOT able to obtain clinical experience through their work or volunteer experience; or prefer clinical experience supervised by IBCLCs. Applications are accepted once each year during the Spring term. See our web site for a [graphic layout](#) of the required coursework and application timeline. Each Spring term the application timeline for that year is posted on this [web page](#).

I'm still confused about the course prerequisites and/or which pathway to use for IBLCE certification.

View some our [Informational Videos and attend one of our Free Info Q&A Sessions](#) to chat live with a faculty member. You can complete the [Advising Worksheet](#) and come in for in-person Advising, or set up an appointment for phone Advising. See our [web site](#) for links, and dates and times for Advising.

In addition, if you are considering obtaining a degree, the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health offers [Undergraduate Advising](#).

Why does this program require that students complete most of the IBLCE Health Sciences Education Requirements before they take the Lactation Education courses?

Students who have already completed these health sciences courses will get more from their lactation education courses, and then be able to apply that knowledge during their lactation practicum courses. They will be able to cover the breadth of material that must be covered in the 100 hrs of lactation education and will feel comfortable in classes that will include health professionals. This is the same course progression that other health professional training programs use.

Why does this program require that students complete the full 2 or 3 course series for Human Anatomy & Physiology when IBLCE only requires completing one course in this topic area?

IBCLCs are allied health professionals and we feel they should have the same preparation as other health professionals. Typically, in the United States the endocrine system is not covered in Human Anatomy and Physiology courses until the 2nd or 3rd course in the course series. The process of lactation is governed by the endocrine system so it is important that IBCLCs are well educated in this area. Taking the time needed to create a good foundation of knowledge in advance allows students to delve deeper into the lactation topics they will encounter in the lactation education and lactation practicum courses. Our goal is for students to have an educational experience that prepares them well for the IBLCE exam, and the work they will be asked to do as IBCLCs.

Does PSU offer ALL of the required prerequisites?

No. While PSU and PCC offer most of the prerequisite courses they do not offer all of them. We have listed the courses that PSU and PCC offer that meet the IBLCE requirements on our web site. We have listed also listed organizations that offer the prerequisites that are not available at PSU.

Program Schedule

What will my schedule look like if I am accepted into the Pathway 2 Lactation Practicum?

During Fall, Winter, and Spring term your clinical experience schedule will be determined by your clinical site. Usually you will be at the clinical site 2–3 days each week, with the shift determined by the site. All students accepted into the practicum will be given their clinical assignments and schedules before their clinical experience courses begin.