

ANSI/ICE 1100-2025, Standard for Assessment-Based Certificate Programs

Risk and Limitations of Application

This Standard provides guidance for Assessment-Based Certificate (ABC) programs and is intended to ensure clarity in defining the scope, stakes, and intended outcomes for certificate holders and stakeholders. However, users of this Standard should recognize that ABC programs vary widely in their stakes and intended application. The degree to which inferences and other decisions based on assessment outcomes have significant consequences for stakeholders—including certificate holders, employers, clients, or the public—shall be carefully considered by the certificate provider.

Certificate providers should assess the appropriateness of applying this Standard based on the specific nature, purpose, and stakes of their program. Misapplication or misinterpretation of this Standard could result in unintended consequences, such as overstating the claims of the certificate or misrepresenting its significance to stakeholders.

Terms and Definitions Used in the Standard

For purposes of clarity, the following terms used within the Standard are defined as follows:

Word	Meaning	Type	Implication
Shall	A requirement	Normative	Mandatory. Must be followed for compliance.
Should	A recommendation	Informative	Strongly advised, but not required
May	A permission	Informative	Optional. Indicates allowable actions.
Can	Possibility or capability	Informative	Describes what is possible, not what is required or recommended.

The Glossary of Terms Appendix in prior revisions of the Standard has been replaced by a link to the most current iteration to the *Basic Guide to Credentialing Terminology*, published by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.).

The following is a normative part of the Standard.

1 Scope, Stakes, and Intended Audience

This standard pertains to Assessment-Based Certificate (ABC) programs. As used within this standard, the terms “program” or “certificate program” refer to an assessment-based certificate program. An assessment-based certificate program is a program that:

- a) defines scope, stakes, and intended audience;
- b) has a rationale for the scope, stakes, and intended audience that describes the degree to which inferences and/or other decisions have significant consequences for the certificate holder or stakeholders (e.g., employers, clients, patients);
- c) focuses on a clearly defined competency or specialized skillset (knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or behaviors) for the intended audience;
- d) provides education/training to aid participants in acquiring and/or demonstrating the competency or specialized skillset associated with the intended learning outcomes;
- e) evaluates whether participants have successfully achieved the intended learning outcomes through at least one valid, summative assessment; and
- f) issues a certificate to those participants who meet the performance, proficiency, or passing standard for the summative assessment(s).

This Standard is **not** intended to apply to degree-granting programs, certification programs, or learning events that lack a summative assessment and instead award only a certificate of attendance or participation.

2 Organizational Structure, Responsibilities, and Resources

The ABC provider shall have the appropriate expertise, resources, and organizational structure to offer and maintain a program that meets or exceeds the requirements of this standard.

2.1 Legal Structure: The ABC provider shall be a recognized legal entity or part of a legal entity.

2.2 Responsibilities of the ABC Provider: The ABC provider shall retain sole responsibility for:

- a) defining purpose and scope of the program;
- b) establishing eligibility requirements to participate;
- c) determining criteria for successful completion of the program (e.g., completion of the education/training; meeting the performance, proficiency, or passing standard);

- d) issuing a certificate based only on information supplied by the participant and their achievement (i.e., application, education/training, assessment[s]).

2.3 Program Scope Limitation: The ABC provider shall confine its program requirements to those matters specifically related to the purpose and scope of the program.

2.4 Financial Resources: The ABC provider shall have the financial resources necessary to carry out its operations capably and to support an effective program.

2.5 Program Design and Delivery: The ABC provider shall contract with or employ a sufficient number of individuals necessary for the operational management of the program. The required qualifications, credentials, skills, and competencies for such individuals and their responsibilities relating to the program shall be specified and documented by the ABC provider.

2.6 Content Development Policy and Process: The ABC provider shall use subject-matter experts (SMEs) and other qualified individuals for the design, development, delivery, and maintenance of the ABC program content and assessment(s). The required qualifications, credentials, skills, and/or competencies for these individuals and their responsibilities relating to the program shall be specified and documented by the ABC provider.

3 Policies and Procedures

The ABC provider shall define, document, and maintain policies and procedures that conform to this standard and that are made accessible to program participants and other stakeholders, as applicable and as required for the specific program.

3.1 Publicly Available Information: The ABC provider shall make each of the following publicly available:

- a) purpose and scope of the program;
- b) eligibility requirements to participate;
- c) criteria for successful completion of the program (e.g., completion of the education/training; meeting the performance, proficiency, or passing standard);
- d) description of the education/training provided and the intended learning outcomes;
- e) description of the summative assessment(s), including an overview of the process for developing and gathering validity evidence for the summative assessment(s); how a participant's performance on the assessment(s) is evaluated/scored; the valid uses of the summative assessment(s) results; and the percentage of participants who meet the performance, proficiency, and/or passing standard for the summative assessment(s) on an annual basis;

- f) qualifications of the facilitators/instructors and SMEs involved in content development;
- g) rationale for certificate expiration date and the specific time period for which the ABC is valid (if applicable);
- h) statement explaining what inferences can properly be made regarding individuals who hold the ABC. These inferences shall be consistent with the stated purpose of the ABC(s), and any other information the ABC provider makes public about the ABC and the assessment(s);
- i) substantive changes (i.e., changes that significantly affect participation requirements or completion criteria) to the current program and the date the change becomes effective; and
- j) policies and procedures for the resolution of complaints or appeals received from participants or other parties.

3.2. Operational Policies and Procedures: The ABC provider shall define policies and procedures for the operation of the program and for the development, delivery, and maintenance of the education/training and assessment(s) that constitute(s) the program. These policies and procedures shall specify each of the following:

- a) qualifications required of all employees, committees, contractors, and/or individuals involved in the development, delivery, and ongoing maintenance of education/training and assessment(s);
- b) procedures used to develop and maintain education/training;
- c) methods used to deliver education/training;
- d) procedures used to develop and maintain assessment(s);
- e) methods used to deliver assessment(s);
- f) types of assessment(s) and procedures used to evaluate or score participants' performance on the assessment(s);
- g) types of feedback or performance information provided to participants based on their summative assessment results; and
- h) quality assurance procedures, including participant feedback and program evaluations and processes to correct identified deficiencies.

3.3 Participant Conduct Codes: The ABC provider shall establish procedures and make publicly available policies to be followed if a participant:

- a) misrepresents their identity or eligibility status;
- b) gives or receives unauthorized assistance on the summative assessment(s);
- c) claims, states, or implies that the ABC is a certification or that its purpose and scope are beyond what is specified by the ABC provider; or
- d) engages in other violations of established policies.

3.4 Fairness and Accessibility: The ABC provider's policies and procedures shall be fair, equitable, and accessible to eligible applicants and participants in both substance and implementation. The ABC provider shall comply with all applicable legal requirements, including providing access to applicants and participants who meet the eligibility criteria.

4 Management of Program Records, Documents, and Materials

The ABC provider shall manage and maintain orderly and accurate records, documents, and/or other materials.

4.1 Record Keeping Responsibilities: The ABC provider shall identify the job title(s) of the individuals responsible for maintaining and disposing of program records, documents, and/or materials.

4.2 Record System and Documentation Requirements: The ABC provider shall maintain a record system that is appropriate for the scope and stakes of its program and is in compliance with legal requirements. The records, documents, and/or other materials maintained shall include:

- a) a listing of all individuals who are currently participating in but have not yet successfully completed the education/training and/or summative assessment(s), including status and requirements met to date;
- b) a listing of all participants who have been issued a certificate, the date that the certificate was issued, and (if applicable) for how long the certificate is valid;
- c) the individual performance of participants on the assessment(s);
- d) the related performance, proficiency, or passing standard for the summative assessment(s); and
- e) the effectiveness of the summative assessment(s) (e.g., information describing key measurement characteristics [e.g., difficulty and reliability] as appropriate for the assessment type).

4.3 Accuracy and Currency of Records: The ABC provider shall have procedures in place for reviewing, updating, and ensuring the accuracy and currency of records, documents, and/or other materials.

4.4 Record Retention and Disposal: The ABC provider shall identify, manage, and dispose of records, documents, and/or other materials in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of its information. The records, documents, and/or other materials shall be kept for a reasonable period of time, as stated in program policy, as required by relevant bodies, or as required by contractual, legal, or other obligations.

4.5 Confidentiality and Security of Participant Information: The ABC provider and/or its contractors shall maintain all personal and financial information pertaining to

participants (e.g., date of birth, social security number, credit card number, assessment[s] results) in a secure manner that, at a minimum, complies with applicable laws.

4.6 Security of Program Materials and Data: The ABC provider and/or its contractors shall maintain all learning and assessment(s) materials, data, and results in a secure manner that meets legal requirements. Measures shall be in place to ensure the ongoing confidentiality, integrity, availability, and resilience of the processing systems used to store such materials, data, and results. The ABC provider shall have policies and procedures in place to notify stakeholders promptly in the event of a data breach.

4.7 Confidential Information Disclosure Policy: The ABC provider shall state which program and/or participant information shall be treated as confidential and the conditions under which such information may be disclosed to parties other than the organization or individual from whom the information was obtained. Participants shall be informed of all conditions for information disclosure prior to entering the program. Confidentiality shall be maintained in accordance with documented guidelines and applicable laws by all individuals working for or on behalf of the ABC provider.

5 Development, Delivery, and Maintenance of Education/Training

The ABC provider shall ensure that the education/training is designed, developed, delivered, and evaluated by qualified individuals in a manner that is appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, consistent with generally accepted instructional design principles, and based on a needs analysis.

5.1 Needs Analysis Process: The ABC provider shall have a process for conducting a structured needs analysis that guides the development of intended learning outcomes, education/training content and assessment.

5.2 Needs Analysis Scope and Depth: The procedure used to conduct the needs analysis shall be consistent with the stated purpose, stakes, and scope of the program. The depth and rigor of the needs analysis shall reflect the consequences of the ABC program for participants and stakeholders. The procedure shall include qualified individuals and stakeholders knowledgeable about the intention, use, purpose, scope, and stakes of the ABC program.

5.3 Program Content: The needs analysis shall inform the education/training content and intended learning outcomes of the program.

5.4 Alignment of Program Design with Learning Outcomes: The ABC provider shall ensure that the program design is appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, content, delivery, and methods, and aligns with the needs analysis and the program's scope and intended use of the ABC.

5.5 Instructional Design Methods: The education/training shall employ instructional design methods that are appropriate for the program's purpose, audience, and delivery method.

5.6 Content Development: The creation and/or selection of education/training content and materials shall include qualified individuals, including SMEs in the subject matter area of the ABC, and effectively address the findings of the needs analysis.

5.7 Program Delivery: The ABC provider shall deliver the education/training as designed. The delivery shall enable participants to accomplish the intended learning outcomes and shall be consistent with the purpose and scope of the program.

5.8 Qualified Instructors: For instructor-led programs, the ABC provider shall ensure that the education/training is delivered by qualified facilitators/instructors using materials appropriate for delivering the education/training as designed.

6 Development, Conduct, and Evaluation of Summative Assessment(s) leading to Issuance of Pass/Fail Decision(s)

The ABC provider shall conduct summative assessment(s) of participants' accomplishment of the intended learning outcomes and shall ensure that the procedures used to develop and conduct the summative assessment(s) and to evaluate/score participants' performance are consistent with the intended use of the ABC.

If the program has more than one summative assessment, each summative assessment shall be in compliance with the Essential Elements.

6.1 Establishment of Validity: The ABC provider shall demonstrate that the summative assessment(s) is/are valid for its intended purpose and shall use methods that support validation that are appropriate for the stakes of the program and assessment(s). The rigor of the validation methodology should reflect the potential impact of assessment outcomes on participants and stakeholders.

6.2 Linkage of the Summative Assessment to the Learning Outcomes: The ABC provider shall provide a summative assessment blueprint that links the summative assessment(s) to the intended learning outcomes. The summative assessment blueprint shall show the number of assessment items or points assigned to each intended learning outcome. A rationale for how the number assigned to each learning outcome was determined shall be provided.

6.3 Selection and Purpose of Measurement Tools: The type and content of the summative assessment(s), including item types (e.g., multiple choice, case studies, work samples) shall be appropriate for measuring participants' accomplishment of the intended

learning outcomes. Additionally, the summative assessments shall align with and reflect the stated and publicly available purpose of the program.

6.4 Maintenance of the Summative Assessment: The ABC provider shall ensure that the content of the summative assessment(s) is reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in the scope, stakes, intended audience, purpose, or content of the program (e.g., changes in intended learning outcomes, changes in education/training). The frequency and depth of assessment review shall be appropriate for the stakes of the program.

6.5 Delivery Method of the Summative Assessment: The method for conducting the summative assessment(s) shall be consistent with the stakes of the program and its stated purpose. The ABC provider shall ensure comparability in the environments in which the assessment(s) occurs. Documentation shall address, at a minimum:

- a) conditions of the environments in which the summative assessment(s) take(s) place (e.g., type of setting);
- b) method(s) of conducting the summative assessment(s) (e.g., live remote proctoring, self-administered through LMS, computer-based in center, paper and pencil);
- c) materials and equipment needed to conduct the summative assessment(s);
- d) instructions to participants;
- e) time allotted for conducting the summative assessment(s); and
- f) level of security required to be consistent with the intended purpose of the ABC.

6.6 Establishment of the Pass/Fail Decision: The ABC provider shall identify a performance, proficiency, or passing standard for the summative assessment(s) that participants shall achieve to be issued the certificate.

The method(s) used for setting the performance, proficiency, or passing standard shall demonstrate that the standard reflects the expected performance of a participant who has achieved the intended learning outcomes and considers the difficulty of the summative assessment(s).

Documentation shall identify the number of individuals involved in the pass/fail decision process, provide a rationale for the method(s), and describe any other resources considered.

6.7 Documentation of Scoring Methodology: The ABC provider shall document the methods for evaluating or scoring participants' performance on all types of summative assessment(s).

6.8 Comparability of Forms: The ABC provider shall ensure the comparability of different forms (versions) (if any) of the assessment(s) with respect to content coverage and overall difficulty of the summative assessment (i.e., the questions on comparable

versions of an assessment(s) cover the same knowledge areas and have the same overall difficulty).

6.9 Performance-based Summative Assessment(s): If the ABC provider includes a summative assessment that requires the candidate to produce something (e.g., essays, work products, portfolios, demonstrations, presentations), the ABC provider shall document the method to:

- a) supply and train raters on the use of rating or scoring scales, performance evaluation checklists, rubrics, and/or other appropriate guidelines to be used to evaluate participant performance;
- b) establish procedure(s) by which raters can be calibrated periodically (if multiple raters are used);
- c) conduct and report analyses of the consistency and/or agreement in the raters' evaluation/scoring as appropriate for the type of summative assessment(s) and its intended use; and
- d) establish procedure(s) by which significant differences in scoring among raters can be discussed and/or remedied (if applicable).

6.10 Score Reporting: The ABC provider shall inform participants whether they have passed or failed the summative assessment(s). A program should provide each failing candidate with information about their performance in relation to the passing standard. A program that provides feedback to candidates such as domain-level or intended learning outcome level information shall offer guidance about limitations in interpreting and using that feedback.

6.11 Interpretation of Assessment Results: The ABC provider shall provide guidance to participants and stakeholders on interpreting and using the results of the assessment(s), including what inferences can appropriately be drawn from the results.

6.12 Maintenance of the Summative Assessment: The ABC provider shall ensure that the content of the summative assessment(s) is reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in the scope, stakes, intended audience, purpose, or content of the program (e.g., changes in intended learning outcomes, changes in education/training). The frequency and depth of assessment review shall be appropriate for the stakes of the program.

7 Issuance, Verification, and Use of Certificates

The ABC provider shall issue a certificate that may take the form of a letter, card, digital badge, or other medium upon completion of the education/training and successful performance on the summative assessment(s). A certificate shall be issued only in

accordance with documented requirements and procedures. Certificate holders shall be informed of the proper uses of the certificate.

7.1 Certificate Issuance Requirements: The ABC provider shall identify the requirements and procedures for issuing the certificate. These requirements shall state that the ABC provider shall not specify acronyms or letters in reference to the ABC for use after participants' names.

7.2 Certificate Content Specifications: The certificate shall contain the following information:

- a) name of the certificate holder,
- b) name of the ABC provider,
- c) scope of the accomplishment,
- d) title of the ABC (if appropriate),
- e) date on which the certificate was issued,
- f) date of expiration of the ABC (if applicable), and
- g) shall be signed or authorized by the ABC provider or a designated representative of the ABC provider.

7.3 Certificate Holder Verification: The ABC provider shall have a verification procedure in place by which the status of ABC holders can be confirmed by employers and other stakeholders.

7.4 Certificate Ownership and Revocation Policy: The ABC provider shall have a policy stating that it maintains the right to recall or nullify the certificate in the event any ABC holder has violated program requirements or policies. The ABC provider shall maintain sole ownership of the certificate in whichever format or medium it may take.

7.5 Use and Representation of Certificates: The ABC provider shall specify how ABC holders refer to the ABC. The ABC provider shall not claim, state, or imply that the program is a professional certification. This responsibility includes making publicly available a statement that ABC holders:

- a) may state that they hold a "certificate in (subject area)";
- b) shall not state that they are "certified in (subject matter)"; and
- c) shall not use acronyms or letters after their names in reference to the ABC.

8.0 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

The ABC provider shall ensure the quality of the program by evaluating and considering improvements based on data that is periodically collected.

8.1. Program Evaluation: The ABC provider shall conduct periodic evaluations to assess the quality and effectiveness of its ABC program and to inform future improvements. The evaluation data shall be collected and analyzed at intervals appropriate to the nature and purpose of the data. Required evidence: Available reports related to evaluations conducted, their frequency, results, and evidence of actions taken/outcomes.

8.2 Evaluation of Operational Management: The ABC provider is responsible for periodic monitoring, assessing, and ensuring the quality of all activities performed on its behalf in accordance with documented procedures. This responsibility includes evaluation of activities performed by employees, committees, contractors, and/or other individuals.

8.3 Evaluation of Program Design: The ABC provider shall conduct periodic reviews and employ continual improvement practices to ensure the instructional design methodologies and principles remain consistent with the program's purpose, scope, and intended audience. Evaluation data shall be collected at appropriate intervals for the data being collected. The review process shall include the procedure(s) and rationale(s) used to implement any modifications. Modifications shall be based on collected evaluation data/feedback pertaining to:

- a) program purpose, scope, and intended audience
- b) education/training design and delivery
- c) participant experience and feedback
- d) facilitator/instructor performance

8.4 Evaluation of Assessment(s): The ABC provider shall conduct periodic reviews and employ continual improvement practices to ensure the ongoing utility for measuring participants' accomplishment of the intended learning outcomes. The periodic review shall ensure the summative assessment(s) remains consistent with the program's purpose, scope, and intended audience. Evaluation data shall be collected at appropriate intervals for the data being collected. The review process shall include the procedure(s) and rationale(s) used to implement any modifications. Modifications shall be based on collected evaluation data/feedback pertaining to:

- a) the total number of participants who sat for the summative assessment;
- b) the total number of participants who completed the program;
- c) summary statistics for the assessment(s) which shall include, at a minimum, the average score (mean), variation in scores (standard deviation), lowest score (minimum), and highest score (maximum);
- d) percentage of participants who passed the assessment(s);
- e) minimum score required to pass the assessment(s); and
- f) a review of the difficulty of individual items or assessment components (e.g., the percentage of participants who answered each item correctly, performed a task successfully, or feedback collected from learners about specific items).