# This document was prepared to provide an overview of the proposed revisions to the NCCA Standards as a result of the 45-day public comment period that occurred from January 29 – March 15, 2021. This document is not a copy of the complete Standards, rather, only includes standards, essential elements, and commentary with substantive revisions as a result of the 45-day public comment period, as shown in red. Additional material is provided for context only and is not open for comment except as it relates to the proposed substantive changes. Only the marked changes in red are open for review and comment during the current 30-day public comment period, July 1 – July 31, 2021.

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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| The Essential Elements are accompanied by ***Commentary****.* The Commentary sections clarify terms, provide examples of practice that help explain a Standard, or offer suggestions regarding evidence that may be provided to demonstrate compliance. NCCA reserves the right to revise the Commentary sections to provide further clarity and guidance as might be needed. A **Glossary** of terms has been updated to define and describe terms within the document with the related purpose of enhancing clarity. | The Essential Elements are accompanied by ***Commentary****.* The Commentary sections clarify terms, provide examples of practice that help explain a Standard, or offer suggestions regarding evidence that may be provided to demonstrate compliance. NCCA reserves the right to revise the Commentary sections **following notice and an opportunity for public comment on the proposed changes**. A **Glossary** of terms has been updated to define and describe terms within the document with the related purpose of enhancing clarity.  |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 1: Purpose** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. The certification program must identify the population(s) being certified.
2. The certification program must make publicly available the purpose of the certification and the designation or mark issued to those certified. The certification program must provide the rationale for the appropriateness of its requirements. If the program does not issue a designation, a reasonable explanation must be provided.

***Commentary:*** 1. Certification can be offered for a specific profession, occupation, role, or specialty area across multiple disciplines. The program should specify the audience(s) it is targeting for certification as well as the scope and purpose of the certification program. The scope should identify the level of experience for the targeted practitioner.
2. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met includes a mission statement, bylaws, candidate handbook, policy and procedures document, and other publicly available documents.
 | **Standard 1: Purpose** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. The certification program must make the following information publicly available\*:
	1. A description of the population(s) being certified;
	2. The purpose and requirements of the certification program;
	3. The credential, designation, and/or mark issued to certificants.
2. **Each designation or mark that is issued or formally recognized by the program must align with the credential earned.**

***Commentary:*** 1. **For purposes of the *NCCA Standards*, a credential is defined as a “formal recognition awarded to an individual who has met predetermined standards and maintains any renewal requirements” and designation is defined as: “An indication of a credential that an individual holds, which could be a specific title, letters, or acronyms before or after an individual’s name.”**
2. **In most cases, the designation issued or formally recognized by the certification program aligns with the credential. In rare cases, however, the program may issue a designation that does not accurately reflect the credential. In those cases, the certification program should:**
* **provide a rationale with supporting information that addresses the potential misunderstanding and/or misuse of the designation by stakeholder groups such as employers or consumers of a certificant’s services, and**
* **have a mechanism to identify variations among certificants that is publicly available.**
1. **In some cases, a certification program may not offer a designation, meaning there is no formal indication of the credential such as a specific title, letters, or acronym that certificants can use before or after their name. In such cases, the certification program should provide an explanation.**
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 3: Education, Training, and Certification** ***Commentary:*** 1. A certification board, its members, certification staff, and volunteers who have access to examination content cannot be involved in the creation, accreditation, approval, endorsement, or delivery of examination review courses, preparatory materials, or training programs designed to prepare for the certification examination. Appropriate firewalls should be in place to avoid an appearance of a conflict of interest. In certain situations, it may be appropriate for faculty from an educational program that leads to certification eligibility to participate in limited item writing. In addition, a certification board can determine what education (if any) is required for initial certification, and what continuing education (if any) is required for recertification.
 | **Standard 3: Education, Training, and Certification** ***Commentary:*** 1. A certification board, its members, certification staff, and volunteers who have access to examination content should not be involved in the creation, accreditation, approval, endorsement, or delivery of examination review courses, preparatory materials, or training programs designed to prepare for the certification examination. Appropriate firewalls should be in place to avoid a conflict of interest**, either in appearance or in actuality**. It may be appropriate for faculty from an educational program that leads to certification eligibility to participate in examination-related activities, provided that this participation does not expose examination content inappropriately. In addition, a certification board can determine what education (if any) is required for initial certification, and what continuing education (if any) is required for recertification.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 5: Human Resources** *(no standard statement)* | **Standard 5: Human Resources** **The certification program must ensure that all certification program activities are conducted by qualified personnel.** |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 8: Awarding of Certification** ***Commentary:*** *(no suggested evidence)* | **Standard 8: Awarding of Certification** ***Commentary:*** 1. **Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include the following:**
* **Description of candidate requirements**
* **Policy manuals**
* **Candidate handbooks**
* **Technical reports**
* **Agreement document with other organization if reciprocity is in place**
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 9: Records Retention and Management Policies** ***Commentary:*** *(no suggested evidence)* | **Standard 9: Records Retention and Management Policies** ***Commentary:*** 1. **Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include the following:**
* **Policy manual**
* **Link to online directory or registry of certificants**
* **Identification of the local legal jurisdiction**
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 12: Security** ***Commentary:*** 1. Suggested evidence includes policy and procedure manuals and signed confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements.
 | **Standard 12: Security** ***Commentary:***1. Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include internal policies and procedures, **blank samples of** confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements, **test security plan, and vendor materials (e.g., policies, procedures, contracts)**.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 13: Panel Composition** ***Commentary:*** 1. Most members of a panel should be certified in the discipline; however, individuals who are qualified in other disciplines may serve as panelists. Examples of such individuals include supervisors, university faculty members, and regulators.
 | **Standard 13: Panel Composition** ***Commentary:*** 1. **Most panels should be generally representative of the candidate population**. Most SMEs should be certified in the discipline and/or actively practicing; however, individuals who are qualified in other disciplines may serve as panelists. SMEs’ levels of experience and knowledge should be congruent with the activity in which they are engaged **and may therefore include some newly certified individuals**. Panelists may also include supervisors, faculty, and regulators.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 14: Job Analysis** ***Commentary:*** 1. Evidence to document that the Standard has been met requires a complete report describing the conduct and results of the job analysis. This report may include the following items:
* A description of the background and experience of subject-matter experts and professionals who participated in various phases of the job analysis;
* Identification of the psychometric consultants or organization used to conduct the job analysis or important phases of it;
* A description of methods used to delineate domains and tasks, (and associated knowledge and/or skills if included);
* A description of the survey sampling plan and its rationale;
* Documentation of survey results, including return rate, analysis of ratings data, algorithms, or other psychometric methods used to analyze or combine ratings data, and a rationale supporting representativeness of survey findings;
* A copy of the job survey(s); and
* Date range or year of the study.
 | **Standard 14: Job Analysis** ***Commentary:*** 1. **Any changes made to the examination specifications after the job analysis report is completed should be documented and a rationale should be provided**.
2. Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met should include a report describing the job analysis method and results. This report may include the following items:
* a description of the background and experience of subject-matter experts and professionals who participated in various phases of the job analysis;
* identification of the psychometric consultants or organization used to conduct the job analysis or important phases of it;
* a description of methods used to delineate job-related elements;
* a description of the survey sampling plan and its rationale;
* documentation of survey results, including return rate **and rating summaries**;
* methods used to analyze **qualitative or quantitative** information;
* documentation of demographic and professional characteristics of survey respondents and rationale supporting representativeness of survey findings;
* a copy of the job survey(s); and
* date range or year of the study.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 16: Examination Development** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. A written and systematic item development plan must be developed and followed to ensure that examination content is accurate, current, and appropriate for candidates, regardless of format and candidate demographics.

***Commentary:*** 1. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include the following: training materials; agendas; reports on item development; procedures for the assembly of forms; procedures and criteria used to examine the performance of examination items or other examination components for inclusion, revision, or removal from the certification process; and technical reports.
 | **Standard 16: Examination Content Development** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. Programs must use and document a systematic process for developing items to ensure that examination content is accurate, current, **fair**, and appropriate for the target population.

***Commentary:*** 1. Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include documentation related to the following:
* training of subject-matter experts (SMEs), **including processes intended to prevent bias**;
* developing items;
* reviewing for accuracy, currency, and relevance of examination items and scoring rubrics, and conformity to the purpose of the examination;
* using empirical item performance data to inform decisions related to the development, use, evaluation, and revision of items;
* assembling new examination forms (**e.g., fixed, CAT, LOFT**) by selecting items, revising items when appropriate, evaluating and refining scoring rubrics (for subjectively scored examinations), and adhering to examination specifications; and
* developing and assembling forms of an examination, including forms that were adapted to another language.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 18: Examination Administration** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. Trained proctors must be used in the proper administration of examinations to minimize the influence of variations in examination administration on scores, regardless of the examination delivery method or examination format. Proctor training must include the management and reporting of irregularities. Proctors must have no conflict of interest or any ability to influence examination results. Proctors must ensure that approved accommodations have been provided. Proctors must confirm they have read and agreed to abide by the procedures outlined in the examination administration manual. For performance examinations, proctors must be provided with specifications for site layout and required tools and equipment to ensure standardized administration.

 ***Commentary:*** 1. Administration sites should offer similar conditions, such as adequate lighting, comfortable seating, and a quiet environment free from distractions, to ensure examinees have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and ability. Working space must be sufficient, and spacing between examinees or workstation divider requirements must be defined to minimize cheating opportunities.
2. The publication of policies, rules, and sanctions may contribute to the certification program’s rights and ability to enforce security and examination administration requirements, take corrective action, and impose sanctions.
3. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include the following:
* Candidate handbook or similar document
* Examination administration manual
* Quality-control policy and procedure documents
* Security procedures manual
* Nondisclosure agreements (NDAs)
 | **Standard 18: Examination Administration** ***Essential Elements:***1. **The program must document that proctors:**
* **receive adequate training,**
* **manage irregularities and document details as needed for an investigation,**
* **provide approved accommodations, and**
* **abide by administration procedures provided by the program.**

***Commentary:*** 1. **Each administration modality** (**e.g., test center, remote proctoring) should be conducive to testing. The administration policies and procedures should be designed to maintain the security of the examination** and ensure examinees have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities. **If the modality does not allow for real-time termination of the administration, the organization should demonstrate how examination security is maintained**.
2. The program should regularly monitor examination administration information **for each delivery modality** (e.g., irregularities, candidate data, item performance) to evaluate and verify examination security. When appropriate, corrective actions should be taken and documented.
3. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include the following:
* candidate handbook or similar document;
* examination administration manual;
* quality-control policy and procedure documents;
* security procedures manual;
* **record of irregularities and actions taken**;
* test security plan; and
* nondisclosure agreements (NDAs).
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 19: Scoring and Score Reporting** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. Failing candidates must be provided with information about their performance in relation to the passing standard. If the program provides feedback to candidates such as domain-level information, candidates must be provided guidance about limitations in interpreting and using that feedback.

***Commentary:*** 1. The certification program should provide candidates with an explanation of the types of scores reported, appropriate uses, and potential misuses of reported score information. Feedback should be appropriate for the type of examination.
 | **Standard 19: Scoring and Score Reporting** ***Essential Elements:*** 1. A program that provides feedback to candidates such as domain-level information must provide guidance about limitations in interpreting and using that feedback.
2. The certification program must provide each failing candidate with information about their performance in relation to the passing standard.

***Commentary:*** 1. The certification program should provide candidates with an explanation of the types of scores reported, appropriate uses, and potential misuses of reported score information. Information about performance in relation to the passing standard provided to failing candidates may be quantitative or qualitative **and should help candidates make decisions about retesting**. Feedback should be appropriate for the type of examination.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 20: Reliability** ***The referenced statements appear under Standard 21 in the current 2014 version of the Standards.*** | **Standard 20: Evaluation of Items and Examinations*****Essential Elements:*** 1. When examinations are adapted across languages **and/or cultures**, certification programs must demonstrate that results obtained from adapted and source versions are comparable.

***Commentary:*** 1. There should be evidence that translated or adapted examinations are testing the same construct as in the original examination. Simple translation and back-translation are not adequate. When candidate volume is sufficient to permit the analysis, differential item functioning (DIF) studies should be used to demonstrate that the construct is equivalent across the two versions. A DIF study indicates the extent to which examinee **subgroups have systematically** different **correct response** frequencies **while controlling for their ability levels**.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 22: Maintaining Certification** ***Commentary:*** 1. Continuing competence may be defined differently than initial competence to account for role differentiation over time. For example, the range of services provided by a certificant may narrow over time due to concentration in a specialized area of service, and the certificant’s range of competence may narrow.
 | **Standard 21: Maintenance of Certification*****Commentary:*** 1. Continuing competence may be defined differently than initial competence to account for changes in an individual’s role over time, **and recertification requirements may be established accordingly**. For example, the range of services provided by a certificant may narrow over time due to concentration in a specialized area of service and the certificant’s range of competence may narrow.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 23: Quality Assurance** ***Commentary:*** 1. Suggested evidence may include quality-assurance policies, meeting minutes, calendars or schedules, and training materials/logs.
 | **Standard 22: Quality Assurance** ***Commentary:*** * Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include the following:
* quality-assurance policies and procedures;
* meeting minutes;
* calendars or schedules;
* audit reports;
* standard operating procedures;
* flow charts;
* error reports;
* change requests;
* candidate's guides;
* **tracking logs;**
* **technical reports**;
* certification processes; and
1. training materials/logs.
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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 24: Maintaining Accreditation** ***Commentary:*** *(no suggested evidence)* | **Standard 23: Maintaining Accreditation** ***Commentary:*** * **Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met may include identification of personnel authorized to submit accreditation information**.
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