# This document was prepared to provide an overview of the proposed revisions to the NCCA Standards. It is not a copy of the complete Standards, rather, only includes standards, essential elements, and commentary where revisions have been approved by the Main Committee, as shown in red.

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| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Introduction**  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. | **2019-2021**  The intent of the 2019-2021 revision is to provide clarification, eliminate redundancies, and increase efficiency for both applicants and Commission members. Revisions were also made to address challenges that have arisen in applying the Standards since the prior revision. The opportunity to reorganize some elements within the current *Standards* resulted in a reduction of the total from 24 to 23.  In accordance with ICE’s *Standards Development Policy*, an open call was issued for interested participants and a 15-member Main Committee was formed.  The Main Committee was charged with drafting initial revisions, reviewing public comment, and voting to accept the revised *Standards.* A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was also formed to provide initial feedback to the Main Committee on their work. The proposed *Standards* were submitted for public comment on January 29, 2021.  The Main Committee voted to approve the revised Standards on TBD.  The revised *Standards* retain their focus on certification programs and continue to be organized into five sections: (1) Purpose, Governance, and Resources, (2) Responsibilities to Stakeholders, (3) Assessment Instruments, (4) Recertification, and (5) Maintaining Accreditation.  To earn or maintain accreditation by NCCA, the certification program must meet *each* Standard and provide evidence of compliance through the submission of required documentation. Accompanying each Standard are ***Essential Elements***, which are directly related to the Standard and specify what a certification program must do to fulfill requirements of the Standard.  The Essential Elements are accompanied by ***Commentary***. The ***Commentary*** sections are considered part of the Standards.  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 may base accreditation decisions on findings of noncompliance with the Standards, the Essential Elements, and as further elaborated in the Commentary.  The Commentary should not be construed as an exhaustive interpretation of the Standards or Essential Elements, however, and NCCA reserves the right to revise the Commentary sections to provide further clarity and guidance as might be needed. The Glossary of Terms has been replaced by a link to the *Basic guide to credentialing terminology* (2nd Edition*,*I.C.E. 2020). There are three instances in the standards in which certain terminology is noted:   1. In the *Basic guide to credentialing terminology (2nd Edition, I.C.E. 2020)*, the definition for Publicly Available is "Easily available and accessible, with or without request". The expectation for NCCA accreditation is that certifying programs should be transparent and accountable to potential stakeholders. Therefore, wherever the term “publicly available” appears, as a rule it should be interpreted as “available without request,” or if a request is necessary, the certification program should explain why a request is necessary. 2. The definitions for the words credential and designation are included in Commentary 2 of Standard 1. 3. An explanation of differential item functioning, not included in the *Basic Guide,* is included in Commentary 4 of Standard 20.   The 2019-2021 revision process was guided by the following tenets:   1. The *Standards* must embody the fundamentals required for protection of the public. 2. Many different types of credentialing programs will seek NCCA accreditation.  The *Standards* and the terminology used must be adaptable to a wide variety of programs in order to achieve NCCA’s public service mission. 3. The *Standards* must present requirements that are still valuable and relevant to the mission of NCCA accreditation. 4. The documentation required for accreditation must be explicit and minimize redundancy and repetition.   The *Standards* must be consistent, relevant, and distinctive, and reflect current practice. |
| **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:***  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; however, if the program does not issue a designation or offers a designation that does not align with the credential that was awarded, a rationale must be provided that adequately addresses concerns about the potential for stakeholder misunderstanding or misuse.   ***Commentary:***   1. Certification can be offered for a specific profession, occupation, role, or specialty area across multiple disciplines. The program should specify the target population(s) 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. A designation that does not align with the credential that was awarded may be characterized by differences in requirements for the credential, such as eligibility, examination content, or examination weights. In such cases, an explanation of those differences and a mechanism to identify variations among certificants should be publicly available. Note that 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…a credential may or may not be accompanied by a formal or distinct designation.” 3. The Basic guide to credentialing terminology (2nd Edition, I.C.E. 2020) defines Publicly Available as "Easily available and accessible, with or without request." However, to achieve NCCA accreditation, certifying programs are expected to embrace transparency and accountability to all potential stakeholders. Therefore, wherever the term “publicly available” appears, as a rule it should be interpreted as “available without request.” If any information identified as “publicly available” in these Standards is only available upon request, the certification program should explain why a request is necessary. 4. 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. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 2: Governance and Autonomy**  ***Commentary:***   1. The appropriate structure and governance of a certification program should reflect the interests of the general public in the availability and implementation of the credential. In traditional forms of professional or occupational certification, the public interest requires direct protection of essential certification decisions from undue or improper influence. Such protection is especially important when a certification program is sponsored by a professional membership association or proprietary entity. The certification program may be a stand-alone legal entity or part of an existing legal entity. The authority of the certification board or governing body should be clearly defined. The tax status of the legal entity should be documented. 2. To ensure a balance of stakeholder input, a system of rotating membership on the certification board over a reasonable period of time may be implemented. 3. Undue influence may result from pressures that diminish or negate the certification program’s ability to act freely on behalf of the interests of the certification program. Undue influence may also be caused by a lack of balanced representation on the certification board. Examples of undue influence can include pressure from a parent organization or outside entity to adjust certification standards, limit the number of certificants, or either reduce or elevate the established standard or requirements. Appointment of a significant number of certification board members by a parent organization or related entity may be considered to constitute undue influence. The certifying organization must explain how selection of the certification board, whether by appointment, election, or nomination, protects the certification board from undue influence. 4. When a certification program involves unique factors, such as a proprietary product and/or service, sensitive intellectual property issues, and/or issues related to national security, these issues may be taken into account when determining the certification program’s stakeholder groups. The certification program may limit involvement by some stakeholder groups in such cases. In such situations the certification program must develop and document alternate means for collecting and considering appropriate stakeholder input and perspective. | **Standard 2: Governance and Autonomy**  **Commentary:**   1. The appropriate structure and governance of a certification program should reflect the interests of the general public in the availability and implementation of the credential. In traditional forms of professional or occupational certification, the public interest requires direct protection of essential certification decisions from undue influence. Such protection is especially important when a certification program is sponsored by a professional membership association or proprietary entity. The certification program may be a stand-alone legal entity or part of an existing legal entity. The authority of the certification board or governing body should be clearly defined in governing or legal documents. The tax status of the legal entity should be documented. 2. A plan to rotate members on and off the certification board should be implemented to ensure a balance of stakeholder input and to prevent undue influence on certification board decisions. 3. Undue influence may result from pressures that diminish or negate the ability of the governing body to act freely on behalf of the interests of the certification program. Undue influence may also be caused by a lack of balanced representation on the certification board. Examples of undue influence can include long-serving board members, pressure from a parent organization or outside entity to modify certification standards, limiting the number of certificants, or either reducing or elevating the established standard or requirements. Appointment of a significant number of certification board members by a parent organization or related entity may be considered to constitute undue influence. The certifying organization must explain how selection of the certification board, whether by appointment, election, or nomination, protects the certification board from undue influence. 4. When a certification program involves unique factors these issues may be taken into account when determining the certification program’s stakeholder groups. These factors may include such things as a proprietary product or service, sensitive intellectual property issues, or issues related to national security. The certification program may limit involvement by some stakeholder groups in such cases. In such situations the certification program must develop and document alternate means for collecting and considering appropriate stakeholder input and perspective.   When a certification program involves unique factors, they may be taken into account when determining the certification program’s stakeholder groups. These factors may include such things as a proprietary product or service, sensitive intellectual property issues, or issues related to national security. The certification program may limit involvement by some stakeholder groups in such cases. In such situations the certification program must develop and document alternate means for collecting and considering appropriate stakeholder input and perspective. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 3: Education, Training, and Certification**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. If the certification organization or a related entity offers examination review courses or materials to prepare for the certification examination, or education/training that meets the eligibility requirements, it must meet the following requirements:  * The organization or related entity must not state or imply that the examination review courses and/or preparatory materials are the best or only means for preparing adequately for the certification examination; * There must be no advantage given to candidates who participate in examination review courses or education/training that meets the eligibility requirements; * The purchase of these courses and materials must be optional; and * The certification organization or related entity must not state or imply that its education or training programs are the only or preferred route to certification.   ***Commentary:***   1. If education/training is a prerequisite for taking the certification examination, a certification program may require graduation from, or completion of, a program accredited or approved by an accrediting or approval body independent from the certification board. 2. 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**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. If the certification organization or a related entity offers examination review courses or materials to prepare for the certification examination, or education/training that meets the eligibility criteria, it must meet all of the following requirements.    * The organization or related entity must not state or imply that the examination review courses and/or preparatory materials are the best or only means for preparing adequately for the certification examination.    * There must be no advantage given to candidates who participate in examination review courses or education/training that meets the eligibility criteria.    * The purchase of these courses and materials must be optional.    * The certification organization or related entity must not state or imply that its education or training programs are the only or preferred route to certification.   ***Commentary:***   1. If education and/or training is a prerequisite for taking the certification examination, the certification program should ensure the impartiality of its process to identify acceptable accrediting bodies. The program may require accreditation from governmental regulators or industry agencies. If the certification program recognizes education or training from a related professional organization, appropriate policies that maintain separation between certification and education should be documented. 2. 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 an appearance of a conflict of interest. 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. Participation depends on the panel and the extent of overlap of the coursework and the examination content. Certification organizations should have policies and procedures that provide a rationale for the extent of content overlap and whether it constitutes a conflict. 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. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 5: Human Resources**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must demonstrate appropriate oversight and monitoring of those personnel performing certification activities. | **Standard 5: Human Resources**  **The certification organization must engage qualified personnel to conduct all certification program activities.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must demonstrate appropriate oversight and monitoring of personnel performing certification activities. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 6: Information for Candidates**  **The certification program must publish certification information that concerns existing and prospective certificants.**    ***Essential Elements:***  The certification program must make the following information publicly available:   1. Descriptions of examination processes, including all modes of examination delivery and the circumstances in which they are offered to potential candidates; 2. A policy for retesting of failing candidates; 3. Policies related to reconsideration of adverse certification decisions; and | **Standard 6: Information for Candidates**  **The certification program must make certification information that concerns existing and prospective certificants publicly available.**    ***Essential Elements:***  The certification program must make the following information publicly available:   1. Descriptions of examination processes for each mode of examination delivery; 2. A retesting policy; 3. Policies related to disciplinary actions, reconsideration of adverse certification decisions, and appeals;   ***Commentary:***   1. Processes associated with review of candidate applications should be described. For example, if coursework is required, how the successful completion of the course is verified should be described. If work product submissions are required, the review process and criteria for evaluation should be provided. 2. Rules and sanctions related to examination administration that contribute to maintaining intellectual property and examination security should be publicly available. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 7: Program Policies**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. A certification program must enforce and periodically review policies and procedures for determining an applicant, candidate, or certificant’s compliance with established certification requirements. 2. In establishing the eligibility requirements for taking the certification examination, the certification board must provide a rationale, either qualitative and/or quantitative, for all eligibility requirements. 3. The certification program must not unreasonably limit access to certification. 4. The rationale for the retesting policy for candidates who have failed the examination must be provided.   ***Commentary:***   1. Prerequisites may be used to set a minimum requirement to be eligible for certification. There should be a clear explanation, along with any relevant data if available, as to why the requirements (e.g. educational, experiential, holding another credential or a combination) are established. 2. Policies and procedures used by the certification program to judge candidates’ compliance with each certification eligibility requirement should be documented. Acceptable forms of verification may include an attestation on an application form, submission of transcripts or other verification by the applicant, auditing of applicant information, and direct verification conducted by the certification program. The methods and procedures selected should reflect the potential risk to the program if the candidate has not accurately reported their compliance with the eligibility requirements. The certification program policy should include both the verification procedures used and the rationale for the selected procedures. 3. Maintaining certification includes abiding by standards of practice, code of ethics, or other certification policies. Policies for filing and handling complaints, taking disciplinary actions, and allowing reconsideration or appeal of adverse certification decisions should be included. The reconsideration process for adverse decisions should be appropriate and promote fairness to the applicant, candidate, or certificant. 4. Procedures for requesting accommodations for candidates with a disability should be stated clearly and be publicly available. The process should include mechanisms that will ensure that proper evidence is submitted to the program to assist it in making a determination regarding the requested accommodation. 5. Any accommodation provided should be reasonable and not compromise the fundamental nature of assessment or the validity of the certification decision. Certification programs should not reveal on score reports or certificates that any accommodation was provided during the administration of the examination. 6. Examples of applicable laws and regulations include the Americans with Disabilities Act for organizations operating in the United States and American entities operating outside of the United States, nondiscrimination laws, antitrust laws, applicable laws that govern the industry or profession, and other relevant provisions. | **Standard 7: Program Policies**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. A certification program must enforce and periodically review policies and procedures for determining applicant, candidate and certificant compliance with established certification requirements. 2. In establishing the eligibility criteria for taking the certification examination, the certification organization must provide a qualitative and/or quantitative rationale for all eligibility criteria. 3. Program requirements must be fair, inclusive, and accessible to potential candidates. 4. The rationale for the retesting policy must be provided. The rationale must address number of retakes allowed, period between retakes, and extent of the exposure of examination content.   ***Commentary:***   1. Prerequisites may be used to set a minimum requirement to be eligible for certification. There should be a clear explanation, along with relevant data if available, as to why the requirements (e.g. educational, experiential, and/or holding another credential) were established. 2. Policies and procedures used by the certification program to judge candidates’ compliance with each certification eligibility requirement should be documented. Acceptable forms of verification may include an attestation on an application form, submission of transcripts or other verification by the applicant, auditing of applicant information, and direct verification conducted by the certification program. The methods and procedures selected should reflect the potential risk to the program if the candidate has not accurately reported their compliance with the eligibility criteria. The certification program policy should include both the verification procedures used and the rationale for the selected procedures. 3. Maintaining certification includes abiding by standards of practice, code of ethics, or other certification policies. Policies for filing and handling complaints, taking disciplinary actions, and allowing reconsideration or appeal of adverse certification decisions should be included. The appeal process for adverse decisions should be appropriate and promote fairness to the applicant, candidate, or certificant. 4. Retesting policies may apply to candidates who have failed the examination or unforeseen interruptions in examination administrations. 5. Procedures for requesting accommodations for candidates with a disability should be stated clearly and be publicly available.   The procedures should include mechanisms that will ensure that proper evidence is submitted to the program to assist it in making a determination regarding the requested accommodation.  Any accommodation provided should be reasonable and not compromise the fundamental nature of assessment or the validity of the certification decision. Certification programs should not reveal on score reports or certificates that any accommodation was provided during the administration of the examination.  Examples of applicable laws and regulations include the Americans with Disabilities Act for organizations operating in the U.S. and American entities operating outside of the United States, nondiscrimination laws, antitrust laws, applicable laws that govern the industry or profession, and other relevant provisions. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 8: Awarding of Certification**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Once a program has been accredited, it may grant reciprocal certification to individuals who hold a similar certification only if the program can demonstrate content and empirical equivalence between its examination and the examination of the other program. It must also provide evidence of comparability between its certification and recertification requirements and the other program’s requirements. 2. If a certifying body issues a trademark, service mark, or certification mark (“mark”) to recognize achievement of a particular credential, the certifying body must have in place policies to ensure appropriate use of any such mark.   ***Commentary:***   1. Granting reciprocal certification presupposes that the sponsors of both programs are in agreement about the arrangement. In some cases, a certification program may cease to exist or an organization is dissolved, and their certificants may be able to recertify with another organization if there is adequate demonstration of equivalence as outlined. 2. Only individuals who have been granted the certification and appropriately maintained the certification may use the mark. Use of the mark may only be made consistent with the scope for which the certification was granted and all applicable use policies of the certifying body, and not in a misleading or fraudulent manner. The certifying body’s policies should provide that it shall take all appropriate steps including legal or other action, such as requiring discontinuation of use of the marks or suspension or revocation of the certification, to protect its rights in the marks from unauthorized use. | **Standard 8: Awarding of Certification**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. An accredited program may grant reciprocal certification to individuals who hold a similar certification from another certifying organization. In this situation, the program must demonstrate comparability of content coverage and examination results, as well as evidence of comparability of certification and recertification requirements and policies. 2. If a certifying body issues a trademark, service mark, designation, or certification mark (“mark”) to recognize achievement of a particular credential, the certifying body must have in place policies to ensure appropriate use of any such designation.   ***Commentary:***   1. Granting reciprocal certification presupposes that both certifying organizations agree to the terms of reciprocity. Accreditation of the reciprocal program provides evidence of comparability, but accreditation alone is not sufficient. If both programs continue to operate and offer reciprocity, ongoing comparability should be maintained. 2. In some cases, a certification program may be discontinued. An accredited certification program may allow certificants from the discontinued program to recertify when comparability has been demonstrated as outlined. 3. Only individuals who have been granted the certification and appropriately maintained the certification may use the designation or mark. Use of the designation or mark may only be made consistent with the scope for which the certification was granted and all applicable use policies of the certifying body, and not in a misleading or fraudulent manner. The certifying body’s policies should provide that it shall take all appropriate steps including legal or other action, such as requiring discontinuation of use of the designations or marks or suspension or revocation of the certification, to protect its rights in the designations or marks from unauthorized use. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 9: Records Retention and Management Policies**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The policy must indicate the length of time records of examination data and reports required to provide evidence of validity and reliability of the examination are retained.   ***Commentary:***   1. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as national security, upon request from any member of the public, the certification program should provide and verify that a certificant possesses currently valid certification. Policies governing verification should allow disclosure of whether the certificant is currently in good standing, without communicating other information that may violate the confidentiality rights of certificants. However, it is permissible for programs to allow certificants to opt out of public listings for various reasons, including security, employer concerns, etc. 2. It is generally advised, but not required, that current certificants be listed in a publicly available directory. | **Standard 9: Records Retention and Management Policies**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The policy must indicate the length of time records of examination data and reports required to provide evidence of validity and reliability are retained.   ***Commentary:***   1. It is generally advised, but not required, that current certificants be listed in a publicly available directory. 2. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as national security, upon request from any member of the public, the certification program should provide and verify that a certificant possesses currently valid certification. Policies governing verification should allow disclosure of whether the certificant is currently in good standing, without communicating other information that may violate the confidentiality rights of certificants. However, it is permissible for programs to allow certificants to opt out of public listings for various reasons (e.g., security, employer concerns). |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 10: Confidentiality**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Signed confidentiality or nondisclosure agreements from all personnel (including staff, certification board members, proctors, examiners, consultants and vendors, SMEs, and applicants/certificants) involved in the certification program must be maintained on record and enforced for protection of privileged information for current and prospective certificants.   ***Commentary:***   1. All information related to the certification examination, including but not limited to the examination, the detailed job analysis report (as opposed to a summary of the job analysis, which must be publicly available), candidate information, proposed or selected examination items, confidential examination administration information, confidential examination construction information, item-level psychometric information related to the examination (other than aggregate examination results, which must be made publicly available), and the like may be considered to be the confidential and proprietary information of the certification program. However, although not required, a program may choose to make its detailed job analysis report available to stakeholders without violating this standard. | **Standard 10: Confidentiality**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Signed confidentiality or nondisclosure agreements from all personnel (including staff, certification board members, proctors, examiners, consultants and vendors, subject-matter experts (SMEs), and applicants/certificants) involved in the certification program must be maintained on record and enforced for protection of privileged information for current and prospective certificants.   ***Commentary:***   1. Information related to the certification examination, including but not limited to the examination, the detailed job analysis report (as opposed to a summary of the job analysis, which must be publicly available), candidate information, proposed or selected examination items, confidential examination administration information, confidential examination construction information, item-level psychometric information related to the examination (other than aggregate examination results, which must be made publicly available), and the like may be considered to be the confidential and proprietary information of the certification program. However, although not required, a program may choose to make its detailed job analysis report available to stakeholders without violating this standard. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 11: Conflict of Interest**  **The certification program must demonstrate that policies and procedures are established and applied to avoid conflicts of interest for all personnel who are involved in certification decisions or examination development, implementation, maintenance, delivery, and revision.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must have a record of and enforce signed conflict of interest agreements with all personnel involved in certification decisions or examination development, implementation, maintenance, delivery, and updating. The certification program must identify who may serve as a proctor, examiner, or judge for any examinations, and documentation must specify the rules and conditions for serving in these capacities. | **Standard 11: Conflict of Interest**  **The certification program must demonstrate that policies and procedures are established and applied to avoid conflicts of interest for all personnel involved in certification decisions or examination development, implementation, maintenance, delivery, and revision.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must have a record of and enforce signed conflict-of-interest agreements with all personnel involved in certification decisions or examination development, implementation, maintenance, delivery, and revision. The certification program must identify who may serve as a proctor, examiner, or judge for any examinations, and documentation must specify the rules and conditions for serving in these capacities. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 13: Panel Composition**  **The certification program must use panels of qualified subject-matter experts (SMEs) to provide insight and guidance and to participate in job analysis, standard setting, and other examination development activities.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Each panel must represent the relevant characteristics of the population to be certified as the program defines them. The process of recruitment and involvement of SMEs must prevent the undue or disproportionate influence of any individual or group. 2. The certification program must document information about the qualifications of all panel members. 3. The certification program must document the responsibilities entrusted to panels and panelists. 4. Documentation of panel meetings must include decisions and recommendations of panelists.   ***Commentary:***   1. The members of each panel should be provided with information regarding the purpose of the examination, the role of the panel, the rules governing panelists’ participation, and a general description of the activities in which they will be involved. 2. 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**  **The certification program must use panels of qualified subject-matter experts (SMEs) to participate in job analysis, item development, standard setting, scoring, and other examination-related activities.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Each panel must represent the relevant characteristics of the population to be certified as the program defines them. The certification program must document information about the qualifications of all panel members. 2. The process of recruitment and involvement of SMEs must prevent the undue or disproportionate influence of any individual or group. 3. The certification program must document the responsibilities entrusted to panels and panelists. 4. Documentation of panel meetings must include decisions and recommendations of panelists.   ***Commentary:***   1. The members of each panel should be provided with information regarding the purpose of the examination, the role and expectations of the panel, the rules governing panelists’ participation, and a general description of the activities in which they will be involved. 2. 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. Examples include newly certified individuals, supervisors, faculty, and regulators. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 14: Job Analysis**  **The certification program must have a job analysis that defines and analyzes domains and tasks related to the purpose of the credential, and a summary of the study must be published.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The job analysis must leadto clearly delineated domains and tasks that characterize proficient performance. 2. The report of the job analysis must describe the methods, results, and outcomes of the job analysis study, including supporting documentation for each element and sufficient information to justify the study's findings and conclusions.   ***Commentary:***   1. Multiple methods exist to define domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skill. Appropriate strategies may include the following:  * Use of committees of qualified subject-matter experts representing key professional characteristics; * Review of related practice-or job-based information, or a review of information from a previous study; * Collection of information using logs, observations of practice, interviews, and/or focus panels; * Review of curricula and training materials; and * Other recognized methods.   The certification program should document the methods by which it defines the content domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills and its rationale for selecting these processes and methods.   1. Validation of the delineated domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills is typically accomplished by surveying current certificants and/or a representative sample of the population that is the intended target audience for the certification. 2. Validation surveys should include rating scales specifically selected and tailored as necessary to assess the critical domains and tasks (and associated knowledge and/or skills if included) to be examined. 3. It is important for surveys to sample broadly within the population as defined by the program to ensure representation by key characteristics, such as major practice area, job title, work setting, geography, ethnic diversity, gender, years of work experience, geographic region (including international, if applicable), and other demographic variables. Stakeholders such as educators, supervisors, and employers may be included, if appropriate. The population from which the sample is drawn should be clearly defined, justified, and related to the purpose of the credential. The sample size and methods by which it is drawn should be psychometrically defensible. 4. Analysis of survey ratings data should determine how and to what degree the performance domains and tasks (and associated knowledge and/or skills if included) relate to the purpose of the credential. A description of the criteria that determine how ratings data are used to assess the validity of the domains and tasks (and knowledge and/or skills if included) should be provided. The rationale for any departures from empirical data should be documented. 5. Analysis of the demographic and professional characteristics of the survey respondents should validate that respondents are representative of the population as defined by the program. Certification programs should identify any patterns in responses based on respondent characteristics that differ substantially from the known characteristics of the population. They should also describe the methods used to mitigate such findings (e.g., weighting of results, subgroup comparisons). 6. 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.  1. The complete report may be considered a confidential document. However, in these cases, programs should make publicly available a summary of the study or a statement regarding the job analysis. | **Standard 14: Job Analysis**  **The certification program must have a study that defines and analyzes descriptions of job-related elements linked to the purpose of the credential.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The job analysis must leadto clearly delineated job-related elements (e.g., domains; tasks; competencies; knowledge, skills, and abilities) that characterize proficient performance. 2. The report of the job analysis must describe the methods, results, and outcomes of the job analysis study, including supporting documentation for each element and sufficient information to justify the study's findings and conclusions. A summary of the study must be publicly available.   ***Commentary:***   1. Multiple methods exist to define job-related elements. These methods may be referred to as task analysis, practice analysis, job task analysis, role delineation study, competency modeling, or another term. Appropriate strategies may include the following:  * use of committees of qualified subject-matter experts (SMEs) representing key professional characteristics; * review of related practice-or job-based information, or a review of information from a previous study; * collection of information using logs, observations of practice, interviews, and/or focus panels; * review of curricula and training materials; and * other recognized methods.   The certification program should document the methods by which it defines job-related elements and its rationale for selecting these processes and methods.   1. Validation of the delineated job-related elements is typically accomplished by surveying current certificants and/or a representative sample of the population that is the intended target audience for the certification. 2. Validation surveys should include rating scales specifically selected and tailored as necessary to assess the critical job-related elements to be examined. 3. The population from which the sample is drawn should be defined, justified, and related to the purpose of the credential. The sample size and methods by which it is drawn should be psychometrically defensible. 4. Analysis of survey ratings data should determine how and to what degree the job-related elements relate to the purpose of the credential. A description of the criteria that determine how ratings data are used to assess the validity of the job-related elements should be provided. The rationale for any departures from empirical data should be documented. 5. Analysis of the demographic and professional characteristics of the survey respondents should validate that respondents are representative of the diversity of the population as defined by the program. Certification programs should identify any patterns in responses based on respondent characteristics that differ substantially from the known characteristics of the population. They should also describe the methods used to mitigate the effects of such findings (e.g., weighting of results, subgroup comparisons). 6. Evidence that the 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, analysis of ratings data, algorithms, or other psychometric methods used to analyze or combine ratings data; * 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.  1. The complete report may be considered a confidential document. However, in these cases, programs should make a summary of the study publicly available. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 16: Examination Development**  **Certification examinations must be developed and assembled in accordance with the established examination specifications and with sound examination development principles and practices.**    ***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. 2. All versions of a certification examination must be the product of an appropriately designed, documented, and executed examination construction process.  * The sampling plan for the examination items must correspond to the examination specifications. * When forms are to be translated into another language, the process must be designed to ensure that content is equivalent. * The established process must be documented to provide evidence of the comparability and integrity of content across forms of the examination. * When the nomenclature used to classify items (e.g., content outline) changes, then items must be reclassified.  1. The development of subjectively scored items (scored by raters) and scoring rubrics must employ rigorous methods that maximize validity. When raters are used to score items, rater qualifications, training materials, and rubrics must satisfy the established specifications for standardization and the validity of scores.     ***Commentary:***   1. Evidence in support of the validity of examination results is demonstrated by documenting conformity to specifications for every form of the examination. Conformity to examination specifications is fundamental to comparability in the content of forms that are replaced over time. 2. Evidence of alignment to specifications provided for different examination formats (e.g., performance, simulation, and multiple-choice examinations) may be different. For example, evidence provided for performance-based tests may indicate the classification of prompts and the elements of a scoring rubric, while evidence for multiple-choice examinations may be the number of items in each category. 3. Steps involved in the examination development process may include but are not limited to:  * Training of SMEs; * Developing items; * Documenting the accuracy, currency, and relevance of examination items and scoring rubrics and their congruence with the purpose of the examination; * Using empirical item performance data to inform decisions related to the evaluation, revision, and use of items; * Assembling new forms of the examination by selecting appropriate items, revising selected items when appropriate, evaluating and refining scoring rubrics (for subjectively scored examinations), and adhering to examination specifications; * Structuring, delivering, and documenting training provided to item writers, item reviewers, and others who produce examination content in a professional and consistent manner; and * Documenting the development and assembly process for forms of an examination.  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**  **Certification examinations must be developed according to established specifications and sound psychometric principles and practices.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Programs must use and document a systematic process for developing items to ensure that examination content is accurate, current, and appropriate for the target population. 2. Programs must use and document a systematic process for creating examination forms to ensure the comparability and integrity of the content.  * Each form must adhere to established examination specifications, including content and specifications consistent with the equating model requirements. * New forms must be assembled and published frequently enough to ensure examination content is accurate and current, and to control for item exposure. * Forms adapted from one language to another must be designed and evaluated to ensure equivalence.  1. When the nomenclature used to classify items (e.g., content outline) changes, programs must use and document a systematic process to update item classifications as needed. 2. Programs that include a performance examination must employ rigorous content development methods, including any associated scoring rubrics or algorithms.   ***Commentary:***   1. Demonstrating that (1) each item links to the content outline and (2) each form is assembled to conform to the examination specifications are necessary to ensure confidence about the validity of each result. The number of forms created, frequency of form revision, and degree of overlap of items among forms should be based on the currency of content and potential item overexposure. 2. Evidence of alignment to examination specifications for different examination formats (e.g., performance, simulation, multiple-choice) may vary. For example, evidence for performance-based tests may be the classification of prompts and elements of a scoring rubric, while evidence for multiple-choice examinations may be the number of items in each category. 3. Evidence of steps of the examination development process may include but are not limited to the following:  * training of subject-matter experts (SMEs); * 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 by selecting items, revising items when appropriate, evaluating and refining scoring rubrics (for subjectively scored examinations), and adhering to examination specifications; and * documenting the development and assembly process for forms of an examination, including forms that were adapted to another language.  1. In some cases a form may not meet specifications (e.g., when items are deleted following preliminary item analysis during key validation). In those cases, procedures used to decide how the results will be treated should be documented. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 17: Standard Setting**  **A certification program must perform and document a standard setting study that relates performance on the examination to proficiency, so that the program can set a passing score appropriate for the certification.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The procedures used to establish performance standards must be based on generally accepted measurement principles consistent with the purpose of the examination and item format(s) used. 2. The certification program must document the standard-setting study in sufficient detail to allow for replication, including descriptions of the procedures followed, results, and appropriate interpretations. If the report is considered confidential, the organization must make a general description of the methods it used in the standard-setting study publicly available. 3. The certification program must evaluate standards of proficiency frequently enough to reflect current practice.   ***Commentary:***   1. Multiple methods exist for standard setting. Appropriate strategies include a review of content or empirical data. Content-based methods may use subject-matter experts to make judgments about an intact form, a representative sample of examination items, or candidates’ completed examinations. Empirical methods use differences in candidate group performance and/or the performance of candidates on other measures linked to relevant standards of proficiency to establish performance standards. 2. The facilitator of a standard-setting study should use item-level and test-level statistics, when available, to monitor the judgment of participants. When feasible, participants may be provided with these statistics. This may mean that the performance standard(s) cannot be set until after an examination has been administered to a sufficient number of candidates. If item difficulty values are relevant to the standard setting method used, they should be provided to judges during the standard setting process. Estimates of the impact on the passing rate for hypothetical performance standards at various points may be shared with participants as appropriate during the standard-setting process if total-score data are available. Information about candidates (such as education and years of experience) underlying the statistical information should be provided because it helps to determine how closely the sample represents borderline candidates. In some situations, little or no relevant statistical information is available (e.g., a new certification program, a small number of candidates, or a significant change in eligibility requirements). 3. The judges in a standard-setting study should be provided with information and training regarding the purpose of the assessment, a conceptual description of the standard of proficiency, eligibility criteria, and how to apply standard-setting process(es) to be used. Judges should be trained in the interpretation of any statistics that are shown to have a sound basis for making required judgments. Judges should be informed that they will make a standard-setting recommendation to the governing body or other policymakers who have the authority to establish it. 4. If the conceptual description of the standard of proficiency is changed, then the performance standard should be re-evaluated. 5. The certification organization should examine, and revise if necessary, the performance standard whenever significant content or specification changes occur for an examination. A standard setting study should be conducted following completion of each job analysis study at a minimum but can be conducted more frequently to support programmatic requirements. 6. Suggested evidence to document that the standard has been met includes a standard-setting study report that addresses the following, as appropriate:  * The rationale for selecting the method used; * The rationale for the number of panelists, the manner of selecting the panelists, and their qualifications; * Qualifications of the psychometric consultants or organization designing and implementing the process; * Procedures and/or materials used; * A conceptual description of the level of proficiency required for certification; * Descriptions or conceptualizations developed by the panelists; * Data-collection activities and procedures; * Analysis of the results of the standard-setting study; * Standard-setting recommendations as developed by the panel; * Any adjustments made to the standard-setting recommendation by a governing body or policy group; * The effective date of the standard; * If available, the resulting pass rate(s), and if multiple hurdles are used, the pass rate for each. | **Standard 17: Setting and Maintaining Passing Standards**  **A certification program must establish a passing standard that relates performance on the examination to the level of proficiency required for certification. In addition, the program must use psychometrically defensible methods to help ensure that candidates are held to the same performance standard.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The procedures used to establish performance standards must be based on generally accepted psychometric principles consistent with the purpose of the examination and item format(s) used. 2. The certification program must document the standard setting process in sufficient detail to allow for replication. The documentation must include descriptions of the procedures and results. If the documentation is considered confidential, the organization must make a general description of the methods used in setting standards publicly available. 3. The certification program must evaluate standards of proficiency frequently enough to reflect current practice. 4. Statistical equating or other psychometrically sound procedures must be used to hold candidates to the same performance standard across forms.   ***Commentary:***   1. Multiple methods exist for standard setting. Appropriate strategies include a review of content and/or empirical data. Content-based methods may use subject-matter experts (SMEs) to make judgments about an intact form, a representative sample of examination items, or candidates’ completed examinations. Empirical methods use differences in candidate group performance and/or the performance of candidates on other measures linked to relevant standards of proficiency to establish performance standards. 2. The panelists for standard setting should be provided with information and training regarding the purpose of the assessment, a conceptual description of the standard of proficiency, eligibility criteria, and how to apply standard-setting process(es) to be used. Panelists should be trained in the interpretation of any statistics that are shown to help make judgments. Panelists should generally be informed that they will make a standard-setting recommendation to the governing body or other policymakers who have the authority to establish it. 3. The certification organization should examine the performance standard whenever significant specification changes occur for an examination. Standard setting should be conducted following completion of each job analysis study but can be conducted more frequently to support programmatic requirements. 4. **(Moved from Standard 21)** The equating procedures should be as rigorous as allowed by candidate volume, item type, and the established construct for the examination. A program should document the procedures used to ensure equivalence of forms and/or scores. The use of standard-setting procedures in place of equating procedures is generally not acceptable. If the program does not equate scores or forms, a sound rationale should be provided. 5. **(Moved from Standard 21)** In the unplanned instance in which the examination specifications have not been met, for example, if items are determined to be flawed during key validation, the procedures used to score individuals and make pass/fail decisions should be documented. 6. **(Moved from Standard 21)** The program should document the equating procedures with a description that includes the following:  * the examination forms being equated; * the rationale for the equating method (e.g. common items, common people, random groups) including the number of items and candidates that are expected; and * whether the equating result is based on classical test theory or item response theory.  1. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met includes a standard-setting report that addresses the following, as appropriate:  * the rationale for panel composition; * qualifications of the psychometric consultants or organization designing and implementing the process; * a conceptual description of the level of proficiency required for certification; * data-collection activities and procedures; * analysis of the results of the standard-setting study; * standard-setting recommendations as developed by the panel; * any adjustment made to the standard-setting recommendation by a governing body or policy group; * the effective date of the standard; and * if available, the resulting pass rate. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 18: Examination Administration**  **The certification program must develop and adhere to its policies and procedures for each examination administration. The procedures must ensure that all candidates take the examination under comparable conditions, safeguard the confidentiality of examinations, and address security at every stage of the process.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Examinations must be administered under secure and confidential protocols that restrict access to examination content to authorized individuals throughout examination storage, conveyance, administration, and disposal. Program policies must be in place to hold examinees accountable for improper behavior before, during, and after examination administration. The program must make a summary of security policies, incident review processes, and disciplinary procedures available to examinees. 2. Examinations must be administered using standardized procedures that have been specified by the certification program to ensure comparable conditions for all candidates and promote the validity of scores. The program must document and follow standardized examination administration procedures, including verification of candidate identity, regardless of the examination delivery or proctoring method. The program must establish and document procedures stating what it expects of examination administration personnel and the procedures to follow to ensure adherence to these requirements. 3. 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. 4. The certification program must have processes to monitor ongoing compliance with examination administration and security procedures.   ***Commentary:***   1. Thorough security protocols help contribute to the reduction of construct-irrelevant variance in scores. It is important that security policies and nondisclosure agreements be in force and documented for every party participating in the examination administration process. Certification program should monitor the administration of its examination, whether administered through its own staff or volunteers or outsourced. 2. 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. 3. The certification program should document and review irregularities. The program should take appropriate preventive action to address foreseeable problems in examination administration and security procedures to ensure fairness and guard against breaches. 4. 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. 5. 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**  **The certification program must adhere to its policies and procedures for each method of examination administration. Policies and procedures must ensure that all candidates take the examination under comparable conditions, safeguard the confidentiality of examination content, and address security at every stage of the process.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Examinations must be administered using secure and confidential protocols that restrict access to examination content to authorized individuals throughout examination storage, conveyance, administration, and disposal. Program policies must hold examinees accountable for behavior before, during, and after examination administration. 2. To ensure comparable conditions for all candidates, the program must document and follow standardized examination administration procedures, including verification of candidate identity, regardless of the examination delivery or proctoring method. The program must establish and document the expectations for examination administration personnel. 3. Qualified proctors must administer the examination. The program must ensure that proctors:  * receive adequate training, * manage irregularities and document details as needed by the investigation that will follow, * ensure that approved accommodations are provided, and * abide by administration procedures provided by the program.   ***Commentary:***   1. Thorough security protocols can reduce construct-irrelevant variance in scores. Security policies and nondisclosure agreements should be enforced and documented for every party participating in the examination administration process. The certification program is responsible for and should monitor the administration of its examination, whether administered through certification program staff, volunteers or a vendor. 2. Administration sites should provide comparable 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 should be appropriate, and spacing between examinees or workstation divider requirements should be designed to minimize cheating opportunities. 3. The program should take appropriate actions to address current and foreseeable problems in examination administration and security policies and procedures to ensure fairness and guard against breaches. 4. The program should regularly monitor examination administration information (e.g., irregularities, candidate data, item performance) to verify examination security. When appropriate, corrective actions should be taken and documented. 5. 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, * test security plan, and * nondisclosure agreements (NDAs). |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 19: Scoring and Score Reporting**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. All candidates must be provided information on their overall performance on an examination. 2. 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. For performance and other examinations where responses are scored by judgment, developers should document methods for developing scoring rubrics, judging responses, reducing rater bias, and increasing inter-rater agreement and consistency to ensure an acceptable level of consistency in scoring judgment-based items. Types of documentation to support these items may include the following:  * Criteria used for selecting judges; * A description of the materials and methods for training judges; * Evidence demonstrating that the primary source of variation in candidate scores comes from candidate performance, not rater error; * Summaries and results of process, rater, or score audits or other technical controls to ensure that the candidates’ performances are the primary determinant of whether they pass or fail examinations.  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. 2. If domain-level information has low reliability, programs are advised against reporting it to candidates and other stakeholders. When domain-level or other specific feedback is given to candidates, the certification program should provide estimates of its precision and/or other guidance. 3. The certification program should ensure the fairness of the examination for all populations. If the program detects potential for unfairness, it should take steps to understand its causes and, if possible, remedy it. | **Standard 19: Score Reporting**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must provide all candidates with information on their overall performance on an examination 2. 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. 3. The certification program must provide each failing candidate with information about their performance in relation to the passing standard.   ***Commentary:***   1. For performance and other examinations where responses are scored by judgment, developers should document methods for developing scoring rubrics, judging responses, reducing rater bias, and increasing inter-rater agreement and consistency to ensure an acceptable level of consistency in scoring judgment-based items. If the performance component is scored without raters (e.g., computer scored), the program should demonstrate how successful performance was determined, how it is being evaluated accurately, and how it aligns to the skill being measured. Types of documentation to support these items may include the following:  * criteria used for selecting judges; * a description of the materials and methods for training judges; evidence demonstrating that the primary source of variation in candidates’ scores comes from their performances, not rater or computer scoring error; and * summaries and results of process, rater, or score audits or other technical controls to ensure that the candidates’ performances are the primary determinant of whether they pass or fail examinations.  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. Feedback should be appropriate for the type of examination. 2. If domain-level information has low reliability, programs are advised against reporting it to candidates and other stakeholders. When domain-level or other specific feedback is given to candidates, the certification program should provide estimates of its precision and/or other guidance. 3. The certification program should ensure the fairness of the examination for all populations. If the program detects potential unfairness, it should take steps to understand its causes and, if possible, remedy it. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 20: Reliability**  **The certification program must ensure that scores are sufficiently reliable for the decisions that are intended.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Certification programs must calculate and report estimates of score reliability, decision consistency, and standard errors of measurement using methods that are appropriate for the characteristics of the examination. 2. Estimates of score reliability and decision consistency must be reasonable to support accurate pass/fail decisions. If the certification program makes pass/fail decisions based on subscores (i.e., the assessment is multiple-hurdle, or non-compensatory), the reliability of each subscore for which a pass/fail decision is rendered must be reasonable.     ***Commentary:***   1. The selection of reliability statistics required for an examination depends on the type of assessment and the purpose of the scores. Programs should document the reliability estimate(s) and provide a rationale for the methods used (e.g., inter-rater agreement and/or inter-rater consistency for performance examinations; internal consistency estimates for multiple-choice examinations). 2. If a program makes decisions using domain-level information, it should demonstrate that the reliability of that information is sufficient and provide a rationale for how it weights and uses domain-level information. 3. When candidate volumes are so small or there are other factors which lead to reliability estimates that are not meaningful, programs should describe the procedures used to demonstrate that the decisions made on the basis of scores are reasonable and fair. 4. Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met includes the following:  * Reliability coefficients, overall standard error of measurement, information function, and/or other statistics pertaining to the consistency of scores; * Indices of classification consistency, conditional standard errors of measurement, or other measures of score consistency around the cut score; and * Information about how non-compensatory domain-level scores and other measures are evaluated and combined. | **Standard 20: Evaluation of Items and Examinations**  **The certification program must evaluate items and examination forms to ensure that scores are sufficiently reliable for the decisions that are intended.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Certification programs must evaluate item performances as well as calculate and report estimates of score reliability, decision consistency, and standard errors of measurement using methods that are appropriate for the characteristics of the examination. 2. Estimates of score reliability and decision consistency must be reasonable to support accurate pass/fail decisions. If the certification program makes pass/fail decisions based on subscores (i.e., the assessment is multiple-hurdle, or non-compensatory), the reliability of each subscore for which a pass/fail decision is rendered must be reasonable. 3. **(Moved from Standard 21)** When examinations are adapted across languages, certification programs must demonstrate that results obtained from adapted and source versions are comparable. 4. **(Moved from Standard 21)** For performance examinations, certification programs must demonstrate that results are equivalent across raters and performance tasks.   ***Commentary:***   1. The selection of reliability statistics required for an examination depends on the type of assessment and the purpose of the scores. Programs should document the reliability estimate(s) and provide a rationale for the methods used. Examples of such methods could include inter-rater agreement, inter-rater consistency, agreement between computer scoring and raters for performance examinations, and/or internal consistency estimates. 2. If a program makes decisions using domain-level information, it should demonstrate that the reliability of that information is sufficient and provide a rationale for how it weights and uses domain-level information. 3. When candidate volumes are so small or there are other factors which lead to reliability estimates that are not meaningful, programs should describe the procedures used to demonstrate that the decisions made on the basis of scores are reasonable and fair. 4. 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 provides a test item statistic indicating the extent to which different groups of examinees at the same ability level have different frequencies of correct responses. 5. Examination evaluation information should include such things as item analysis, reliability, decision consistency, speededness, and candidate feedback. This evaluation should be conducted frequently enough to ensure integrity of examination results. 6. Suggested evidence to document that this Standard has been met includes the following:  * reliability coefficients, overall standard error of measurement, information function, and/or other statistics pertaining to the consistency of scores; * indices of classification consistency, conditional standard errors of measurement, or other measures of score consistency at the cut score; and * information about how non-compensatory domain-level scores and other measures are evaluated and combined. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 21: Examination Score Equating**  **The certification program must demonstrate that different forms of an examination do not advantage or disadvantage candidates because of differences in the content framework and/or difficulty of particular forms.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Each active form of the examination must align to currently applicable content specifications, consistent with the requirements of the equating model. 2. The certification program must use statistical equating procedures grounded in accepted psychometric practices. 3. When examinations are adapted across languages, certification programs must demonstrate that results obtained from adapted and source versions are comparable. 4. For examinations that are subjectively scored (i.e., using raters), certification programs must demonstrate that results are equivalent across raters and assessment tasks.   ***Commentary***:   1. Certification programs should monitor form equivalence on an ongoing basis. The equating procedures employed should be the most rigorous permitted by such factors as candidate volume, item type, and the established construct for the examination. Programs should report the procedures they use to ensure ongoing equivalence of forms and/or scores. The use of standard-setting procedures in place of equating procedures is generally unacceptable. A program should demonstrate that construct-irrelevant factors do not advantage or disadvantage candidates. 2. There are many reasons that a form may not match the content specifications, such as when items are deleted following preliminary item analysis during key validation. Deviation from content specifications may not require further consideration or additional review if the deviation is within the tolerance established in examination specifications. When the content distribution of scored (not pre-examination items) items falls outside the acceptable range, the procedures used to decide how the results will be treated should be documented. 3. When changes that may affect equating occur, such as the revision of examination specifications because of an update to the job analysis, a modification in the passing standard, or some other policy change, organizations should apply effective psychometric strategy(ies) to control or mitigate the impact of these events. 4. The program should document the equating procedures with a description that includes the following:  * The examination or examinations being equated; * The rationale for the design and method of equating; * The equating data collection design (e.g., common items, common people, random groups); * The statistical model used to accomplish the equating (e.g., Rasch, other item response theory, and classical models); and * The number of items and the number of examinees used in the equating procedure.  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 function studies should be used to demonstrate that the construct as manifested in the hierarchy of item difficulty is equivalent across the two versions. | **~~Standard 21: Examination Score Equating~~**  **The essential elements and commentary was reallocated to be encompassed under standard 16, 17, and 20.**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Current Standards** | | **Revisions from the Main Committee** | | **Crosswalk to Current Essential Elements** | | | | | | | 16 | Examination Development | 16 | Examination Content Development | 16A | 16C | 16B | 21A |  |  | | 17 | Standard Setting | 17 | Setting and Maintaining Passing Standards | 17A | 17B | 17C | 21B |  |  | | 18 | Examination Administration | 18 | Examination Administration | 18A | 18B | 18C | 18D |  |  | | 19 | Scoring and Score Reporting | 19 | Score Reporting | 19D | 19E | 19A | 19C | 19B |  | | 20 | Reliability | 20 | Evaluation of Items and Examinations | 20A | 20B | 21C | 21D | 23C |  | | 21 | Examination Score Equating |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 22: Maintaining Certification**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must have a statement of purpose for the recertification requirements that is consistent with the Commission’s definition of recertification. 2. The certification program must have a definition of continuing competence that is consistent with the Commission’s definition of continuing competence. 3. Certification must be time limited with a specified beginning and end date to the period of certification. The recertification period selected must be supported by a rationale that reflects how the relevant knowledge and skills for the certificants and for the field may change over time. 4. Programs applying for accreditation must require periodic recertification for all certificants. 5. The certification program must have a mechanism to verify that certificants have met the recertification requirements. 6. The certification program must make all recertification policies and procedures (including statements of purpose, definitions, and rationales) publicly available.   ***Commentary:***   1. The Commission defines recertification as “requirements and procedures established as part of a certification program that certificants must meet to maintain competence and renew their certification.” 2. The recertification requirements can either measure and/or promote continued competence. 3. The Commission defines continuing competence as “demonstrating specified levels of knowledge, skills, or ability not only at the time of initial certification but throughout an individual’s professional career.” 4. The public may interpret continuing competence to mean that the services provided by certificants will always be delivered at the highest-quality level regardless of practical limitations for what certification and recertification can realistically achieve. The certification program should provide an explanation of the limitations of a certification program’s definition of continuing competence relative to the public’s likely understanding of continuing competence. 5. 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. 6. Lifetime certification is not consistent with the requirement for periodic recertification. 7. If a certification program issues a limited-duration certification with a specified termination date and with no option for an individual continuing to claim the certification beyond that date, recertification does not apply. 8. Recertification requirements may differ for more recent certificants as compared to certificants from earlier years, but all certificants must be held to some form of recertification requirements that support the goal of maintaining competence. Different requirements may be the result of the need to balance the desire to advance requirements for the future of the profession with the need to maintain the contract made with earlier certificants. 9. If any certificants are exempted from current recertification requirements, the certification program should provide a rationale to explain how the current knowledge and/or skills of those individuals will be maintained. The period during which such recertification exemptions were granted must have been terminated before the certification program applies for accreditation. 10. If a certification program allows certificants to select from among multiple recertification options, then the certification program should document how each option links to the common goal of maintaining competence. 11. If self-assessment is the recertification requirement, then the certification program should describe how it addresses the typical limitations of self-assessment (e.g., lack of objectivity) and how it translates the results of the self-assessment to a verifiable professional development plan. 12. Forms of evidence supporting compliance could include the following: 13. Policies that specify that all certificants are required to comply with recertification requirements. 14. Policies and procedures that specify the consequences for certificants who do not meet recertification requirements within the specified period. 15. Policies and procedures explaining the process for regaining certification discontinued for noncompliance with recertification requirements. | **Standard 21: Maintenance of Certification**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must have a rationale for recertification requirements, and the rationale must address the purpose of recertification. 2. Certifications must be time-limited with a specified beginning and end date to the period of certification. The recertification period selected must be supported by a rationale that reflects how the relevant knowledge and skills for the certificants for the field may change over time. 3. The certification program must have a mechanism to verify that certificants have met the recertification requirements. 4. The certification program must make publicly available all recertification policies and procedures, including definitions and statements of purpose.   ***Commentary:***   1. The recertification requirements can either measure and/or promote continuing competence. 2. Continuing competence may be defined differently than initial competence to account for an individual’s role changes 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. Therefore, recertification requirements may be developed to accommodate for these changes. 3. If a program issues a limited-duration certification with a specified termination date and with no option for an individual to renew the certification beyond that date, the requirement of recertification does not apply. 4. Recertification requirements may differ for certificants who recently earned the certification as compared to certificants who earned the certification many years earlier. Different requirements may be the result of the need to balance the desire to advance requirements for the future of the profession with the need to maintain the contract made with earlier certificants. 5. If any certificants are exempted from current recertification requirements, the period during which such recertification exemptions were granted must have been terminated before the certification program applies for accreditation. Certificants who are exempted from current recertification requirements must be identified and their certification information made publicly available. 6. If a certification program allows certificants to select from among multiple recertification options, then the certification program should document how each option links to the common goal of continuing competence. 7. If self-assessment is the recertification requirement, then the certification program should describe how it addresses the typical limitations of self-assessment (e.g., lack of objectivity) and how the certification program translates the results of the self-assessment to a verifiable professional development plan. 8. Forms of evidence supporting compliance with this standard could include the following:  * policies that specify that all certificants are required to comply with recertification requirements; * policies and procedures that specify the consequences for certificants who do not meet recertification requirements within the specified period; and * policies and procedures explaining the process for regaining certification discontinued for noncompliance with recertification requirements. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 23: Quality Assurance**  **The certification program must have a quality-assurance program that provides consistent application and periodic review of policies and procedures.**    ***Essential Elements:***   1. Mechanisms must be in place to promote delivery of program activities as intended, including such activities as application processing, examination preparation and publication, scoring, documentation, and financial management. 2. Processes must be in place to deal with errors found in program activities. 3. Certification organizations must have policies and procedures requiring the regular review of examinations and the results obtained from their use, including the management and correction of examination-related errors.     ***Commentary:***   1. The certification program should document evidence of regular training of staff, orientation and training of board members, and training of SMEs to demonstrate compliance with this standard. 2. Error handling involves both prevention of error through routine quality-assurance procedures and procedures to correct errors discovered after program activities are implemented or active. 3. Many organizations have an examination committee responsible for the periodic evaluation of the examination used in a program and often have staff members who work with the examination committee. These committees and staff should recommend improvements in the psychometric strategy, given that they monitor changes that may develop over time in the number and/or qualifications of candidates, the nature of the examination, and the types of decisions the examination supports. 4. The policies and procedures pertaining to the evaluation of the examination program should indicate which quality indicators the certification organization uses and how it decides upon recommendations for improvement. 5. Policies and procedures should identify the parties who have primary responsibility for monitoring examination quality and making recommendations for improvement, as well as the types of information these parties will review and the frequency of review activities. 6. Evaluation information may include item analysis, reliability, decision consistency, speededness, and candidate feedback. 7. Suggested evidence may include quality-assurance policies, meeting minutes, calendars or schedules, and training materials/logs. | **Standard 22: Quality Assurance**  **The certification program must have a quality-assurance program that provides for the consistent application and periodic review of policies and procedures.**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. Programs must implement quality assurance policies and procedures that promote the delivery of the certification program’s activities as intended and identify opportunities for improvement. 2. Monitoring processes must be in place to identify errors or irregularities found in the program’s certification activities, including examination development, administration, and scoring. Errors and appropriate corrective and preventative actions must be documented. 3. The program must document the regular review of all certification program policies and procedures.   ***Commentary:***   1. Policies and procedures should demonstrate and verify how the program manages and improves the quality of the certification program’s activities. 2. The certification program should document and retain sufficient records of certification program activities to show evidence of compliance with quality assurance policies and procedures (e.g., errors found in applications, financial records, appeals, governance documents). 3. Monitoring certification activities may include auditing and tracking issues, anomalies, errors, complaints, and appeals. 4. The certification program should have processes to monitor ongoing compliance with examination administration and security procedures, including oversight of outsourced activities. 5. Handling of errors involves both prevention of the error and correction of errors discovered after program activities are implemented.Errors may occur in any certification activities such as the following:  * application processing; * examination development, publication, delivery, and scoring; * records related to certification activities; and * financial management.  1. The policies and procedures pertaining to the evaluation of the certification examination should indicate which quality indicators the certification organization uses and how it makes decisions regarding recommendations for improvement. Policies and procedures should identify the parties who have primary responsibility for monitoring examination quality and making recommendations for improvement. 2. Suggested evidence may include documentation such as 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, * certification processes, and * training materials/logs. |
| **Current Standards** | **Revisions from the Main Committee** |
| **Standard 24: Maintaining Accreditation**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must annually complete and submit information requested of the certification agency and its programs for the previous reporting year.   ***Commentary:***   1. Programs should present material changes to the ICE office in writing PRIOR to implementation because of the possibility that the implementation of the change could violate current Standards. These may include major changes in any of the following:  * Legal status or governance structure of the certification agency; * Purpose, scope, or activities of the certification program; * Purpose, scope, or objectives of any certification examinations; * Examination development, administration and/or evaluation procedures. | **Standard 23: Maintaining Accreditation**  ***Essential Elements:***   1. The certification program must annually complete and submit information requested of the certification organization and its programs for the previous reporting year.   ***Commentary:***   1. Because a change could violate current standards, programs presenting material changes in writing to the Accreditation Services staff in the ICE office should wait to receive approval PRIOR to implementation. These changes may include, but are not limited to, major changes in any of the following:  * legal status or governance structure of the certification agency; * purpose, scope, or activities of the certification program; * purpose, scope, or objectives of any certification examinations; * program name and/or designation; and * examination development, administration and/or evaluation procedures. |
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| **NCCA Glossary** | **The NCCA Glossary will be removed and replaced with reference and link to the *Basic guide to credentialing terminology (2nd Edition, I.C.E. 2020):*** [**https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=530&blogaid=613**](https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=530&blogaid=613) |