



The digital HPC pins have become the hottest Hollywood accessory.

International Surgical Society releases Hands of Life Program - Wearables Assessment

The International Surgical Society has released its pilot findings for monitoring of surgical hygiene practices. The practice introduces a new dimension to the ISS Continuous Certification process that measures the degree of hand-washing compliance among Diplomates. Dubbed “Hands of Life,” or HOL, the program uses sensors embedded in a wrist band worn by surgeons to record in real time the frequency and duration of handwashing activities. Data is automatically transmitted to the Board recertification portal and added to a candidate’s record.

According to the Institute for Healthcare, hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) affect nearly 1.7 million people and cause between 100,000 and 200,000 deaths each year. Healthcare providers clean their hands less than 50% of the time expected of them. The World Health Organization reports that out of 100 hospitalized patients, 7 in developing countries and 15 in developing countries acquire at least one healthcare-associated infection.

Continued on page 2

Weather Forecast

Expect a cool morning with a 40% chance of rain, although attendees with ClimateSync jackets can look forward to a comfortable 72°F microclimate regardless of conditions. By afternoon, augmented reality foliage filters will enhance Rhode Island's already spectacular fall colors. Users are reminded to disable the *Peak Autumn* setting before posting photos, following last year's controversy over digitally enhanced leaf-peeping. Coastal winds may briefly interfere with personal weather drones. Attendees are encouraged to keep their umbrellas in manual mode.

Special Issue

This publication is intended to spark ideas, excitement, and critical thinking about the future of credentialing. The stories within are imagined outcomes taking place in 2031 from signals that are seen today. The concepts presented are not “positions” from I.C.E., but rather foresight visioning of possible futures.

I.C.E. on the Red Carpet

At the 2031 Academy Awards, the hottest accessory wasn't a designer gown or diamond necklace. It was a verified Human Performer Credential. Developed with guidance from the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.), the new credential verifies that an actor's performance is authentically human, not AI-generated. Every nominated actor proudly displayed the digital seal alongside their name as the Academy celebrated the art of human performance. The night's biggest applause came when the Best Actor winner declared, “*I'd like to thank the Academy, my partner, and the HPC certifying board.*”

New Deep Thinking Credential Requires 90 Minutes of Doing Nothing

Candidates pursuing the new Certificate in Contemplative Reasoning receive a notebook, a question and a quiet room. Then the clock starts.

No AI. No internet. No reference materials.

For the first 30 minutes, they are not allowed to write. They must just sit and ponder.

The assessment was developed in response to employer concerns that workers are increasingly skilled at producing answers without spending enough time examining the problem.

Candidates are evaluated on the quality of the questions they identify, assumptions they surface, competing interpretations they consider and reasoning they eventually document.

Demand has exceeded expectations. So has cheating.

Two candidates were disqualified last month after investigators discovered AI-generated notes embedded in the labels of their water bottles.

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General News

Hands of Life Continued

Dr. Savia Laif, Executive Director of the ISS proclaims, “we have been looking for more meaningful way to assess the direct impact and capacity for harm of our Diplomates. Our ability to measure hand washing is one of those areas of undeniable impact.” Dr. Laif states that the ability for the certification program to move beyond knowledge assessment into the microscopic behaviors of practicing surgeons will likely have a greater impact than any prior form of assessment.

The current ISS Continuous Certification program involves a combination of continuing education, practice reflection, performance improvement exercises, and longitudinal assessment. This would be the first explicitly behavioral assessment the program administers past the practical exams for initial certification.

The ISS director of assessment development, Dr. Marge Atta, expresses the opportunity succinctly: “Knowledge assessment only takes you so far. This assessment gets at what people do. Anyone can answer a question ‘Do you wash your hands for 20 seconds followed by 40 seconds of drying’ on a multiple-choice test. This assessment tells us directly whether people are doing what is best for their patients.”

Dr. Atta goes on to describe additional benefits, that include assessing Diplomates while they are going about the regular course of their day. “They don’t need to interrupt their work, travel, or study - the just need to do what they know they should be doing anyway,” she states.

When asked about any downsides or risks, Atta downplays the negatives with a sense of humor: “Well, we do get the ‘Big Brother’ response, but *really?*” She also offers, though some of the more serious considerations, such as the concept of a passing score. “We struggled somewhat with our approach to cut scores. Arguably, we would want 100% compliance, but somehow that seemed unattainable.” Instead, the program opts for a 90% compliance rate that is reinforced with gaming principles. Every Diplomat can see their rate of compliance reported compared with the community as a whole. “We’re a pretty competitive bunch, so knowing you aren’t as good as the next guy can be pretty motivation,” she offers. “Everyone who has participated has seen an increase in compliance.”

For the time being, the ISS will incorporate the Hands of Life as an optional component of the Continuing Certification Program, but if the results are as promising as they seem, we may see it roll out as a permanent component, and may see it surface in other professions that rely heavily on good hand-washing practices.

Jupiter Findings Now Require Human and Machine Sign-Off

Scientists analyzing observations from Jupiter and its moons are operating under a new research-integrity standard requiring major findings to receive both machine and human validation before public release.

The rule was adopted as autonomous scientific agents became capable of identifying patterns and generating hypotheses faster than human teams could independently review them. Supporters say the system combines machine scale with human judgment.

Critics say it creates the appearance of two independent reviews when humans increasingly rely on machines to understand the underlying data.

Early observations have already produced what one researcher described only as: “Something we would very much like to check twice.”

The Credential Creep Index

Newly credentialable in October 2031

- Conflict repair
- AI supervision
- Mentoring
- Listening
- Ethical decision-making
- Prompt restraint
- Cross-cultural conversation
- Contemplative reasoning
- Digital skepticism
- Human-machine collaboration
- Professional courage
- Deep work
- Attention management
- Meeting recovery

Asked whether there is a point at which society has credentialed enough things, one industry analyst laughed. Then he checked whether there was a badge for answering the question.

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Reader Opinion

The Exam That Learned to Keep Up

A psychometrician’s case study in modernizing certification when the job won’t hold still

Liberty Munson, Director of Psychometrics

In 2025, our certification exams looked like nearly every other certification exam: a fixed form of traditional questions (e.g., multiple choice, drop down, build list, etc.), refreshed on a schedule that quietly assumed the underlying job changed slowly. It didn’t, not in the IT space. By the time an item cleared development, review, and beta, the technology it measured had already shipped two new versions. We weren’t testing the job role. We were testing its memory of last month.

So, we stopped patching and rebuilt.

I’ll start by busting a myth before it spreads: modernization did not mean throwing out the multiple-choice question. That item type is a workhorse, and I’ll defend it at any dinner party. The problem was never the format; it was candidate perception because they often see multiple-choice questions as tests of recall rather than demonstrations of real-world ability. Even when well designed, they can feel disconnected from the complex, contextual decisions professionals make on the job.

“We weren’t testing the profession. We were testing its memory of last month.”

Our redesign rested on making changes to support the pace of change in critical IT professions and to ensure that our credentials remained relevant and meaningful.

We put an agent on the job itself. The slowest step in any exam program was noticing that the work had changed. We now run an agent that watches the signals, such as product releases, job postings, community discussion, telemetry from the work itself, and flags a shift the moment it trends toward something meaningful, not a year later when it's obvious. That lets us revise the job task analysis (JTA) and the objective domains (OD) quickly, regularly, and far more efficiently than the old multi-month cadence allowed. SMEs are still in the loop; they validate what matters and rule out noise, but the content domains have become closer to continuous: seamless updates as the role evolves, instead of a disruptive rewrite every year.

We made assessment ongoing, not episodic. Certification exams provide valuable evidence of a candidate’s skills at a specific moment, but careers do not stand still: skills grow, fade, and must be renewed. So validation now continues throughout a career through lighter, more frequent touchpoints that complement certification. The goal is not to test people more, but to ensure the credential remains meaningful long after the day it was earned.

We paired human judgment with AI carefully. AI now drafts and clones items and models difficulty before a single candidate sees them. But every item still clears a psychometrician and an SME. I want to be direct here, because the field learned this the hard way: automation supports our judgment, it does not replace it. Context is what makes an assessment fair, and context is still a human contribution.

We broadened performance assessment. Scenario-based case studies are not new to us. For years our exams have asked candidates to solve problems rather than recall a definition. What changed is the inclusion of more practical demonstrations of skills. Performance-based experiences now extend across the certification journey: activities performed inside the application during the exam, portfolio reviews that weigh real work over time, and evidence captured in the flow of work itself.

The result is a credentialing program with three complementary measures, each answering a different question. The certification verifies you meet a defined, durable standard for a role. Applied skills, which are short, scenario-based checks scoped to a single task or product capability, confirm you can perform a specific thing on demand. Verified proficiency ties them together with evidence drawn from authentic work rather than a single sitting. No one measure carries the whole weight; together they describe a professional far more completely than any multiple-choice form alone.

Would I call it finished? No. A modern exam is never finished; that’s the point. But we traded a static snapshot for a living measure, and we did it without loosening the standard candidates and the public rely on. The lesson here is that modernization isn’t about chasing shiny tools. It’s about keeping the meaning of the credential steady while everything around it changes, including the job itself.



BY THE NUMBERS

<30 days

From skill emerging in the field to it being measured on the exam (down from roughly 6 months)

>50%

Rise in candidate-reported relevance (“this exam reflected my job”)

3 Complementary Measures

Certification, applied skills, and verified proficiency work together to provide a wholistic picture of someone’s skills over the course of their career

Badge Maxxing Is Here. Recruiters Would Like it to Stop.

The newest professional-status competition is not salary, title, or follower count. It’s badge count.

“Badge maxxing,” the practice of collecting large numbers of digital credentials to build an impressive professional wallet, has spread rapidly among Gen Z workers.

Popular targets include microcredentials in AI tools, facilitation, leadership, public speaking, financial literacy, and increasingly specific workplace behaviors. One viral post this month featured a 32-year-old product manager celebrating his 250th verified credential.

Recruiters were less impressed.

“We absolutely want evidence of skills,” said one talent executive. “We do not want 250 pieces of evidence.”

Several employers have responded by limiting applicants to the 10 credentials they consider most relevant to a role.

Powerpoint Joins the Artisanal Economy

Handmade furniture. Small-batch bread. Human-written letters.

Add presentation decks.

A new luxury-design movement is celebrating slides created entirely by humans, including original layouts, manually selected images and transitions placed “by feel.”

Collectors call the practice slidecraft.

A 62-slide investor presentation created without generative assistance sold at auction last week for \$8,400. The designer spent 11 days on it.

“It has imperfections,” the buyer said. “That is how you know someone made it.”

You Quit. Do You Get to Take Your Skills with You?

A former employee of Redstone Technologies has sued the company for refusing to release 37 employer-verified credentials from her learning record after she accepted a job with a competitor.

Redstone argues that several badges reflect proprietary training and internal systems and therefore constitute company intellectual property. The employee says the training may belong to Redstone. The abilities do not.

At issue is a question that likely matters to millions of workers as employers become major credential issuers: Who owns the evidence of what you learned at work?

Labor groups are backing legislation that would give employees a right to portable records of verified skills while allowing employers to protect proprietary content.

“Your employer can keep the manual,” one advocate said. “You should get to keep what you learned from it.”

Looking Back: How the Future of Credentialing Took Shape

A 2023 report from I.C.E. planted the seeds of foresight that still guide credentialing today

When the *Future of Credentialing* report was first released in 2023, few could have guessed how quickly it would influence the field. Today, in 2031, it is often cited as the spark that pushed credentialing organizations to think beyond incremental improvements and begin planning boldly for the future.

In an interview, Denise Roosendaal, executive director of I.C.E. at the time and currently, recalled how the effort began. “The board was already very strategic,” she explained, “but we needed a way to help organizations look further ahead. We were great at building a better program, but not always at preparing for what was coming.”

Drawing inspiration from ASAE’s ForesightWorks, Roosendaal brought the idea of a foresight-focused report to the I.C.E. board. Funding was limited, so the team zeroed in on three tightly defined drivers: credentials under pressure, technology innovation, and government and credentialing. A small advisory group worked with the consulting firm Foresight Alliance to conduct research, test concepts through interviews, and write the paper. Importantly, I.C.E. members themselves authored the “Take Action” sections, grounding the report in practical next steps.

The report’s release was deliberately provocative. I.C.E. paired it with tools to help leaders put it to use, including a facilitator’s guide, customizable slide decks, and a “Thinking Like a Futurist” webinar. Adoption was strong, especially among CEOs, consultants, and testing vendors. Within months, boards were using the prioritization survey to identify which challenges mattered most to them.

Looking back, Roosendaal noted two surprises: how quickly topics like AI and credential aggregators became reality, and how essential it was to build a culture of foresight inside organizations. “The real power,” she said, “wasn’t just in the report. It was in learning to ask what’s next, and to do it together.”

The project established a core guiding principle that I.C.E. uses today: tell our story well about the value of credentialing. “If we had not taken the steps to create simple, easy-to-share, talking points about how important credentialing is to society,” Roosendaal stated, “we would have certainly felt the impacts of public policy in the past few years.”

Today, with hindsight, it’s clear: I.C.E. didn’t just publish a paper. It seeded a movement that continues to shape how the profession prepares for whatever comes next.



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High School? He Built a City Instead.

Minecraft Offers a New Path Instead of Graduation

Seventeen-year-old Mateo Rivera will not receive a traditional high school diploma this spring.

He already has a job offer.

Rivera became one of the youngest candidates to earn the Certified Systems Builder credential through an assessment environment built inside Minecraft. Candidates spend six weeks designing and operating a simulated city while responding to changing resource constraints, infrastructure failures, resident needs, and environmental events.

The credential does not assess Minecraft proficiency. It assesses systems thinking, budgeting, collaborative planning, spatial reasoning, and decision-making under changing conditions.

Rivera's portfolio included a water shortage, transit failure and budget crisis.

“I did take algebra,” he said. “I just used it to keep 40,000 simulated people from losing water.”

Several states now accept the credential toward alternative secondary-school completion pathways.

Education officials remain divided over whether that represents innovation or further fragmentation of what a diploma is supposed to mean.

No Credential, No Conference

Bosses Require Proof of Networking Skills Before Approving Event Attendance

For years, employees had to justify conference travel with a budget, business case and approval from their manager. Now some companies are asking for something else: Proof they know how to talk to people once they get there.

A growing number of employers will no longer approve registration or travel expenses for professional conferences unless the employee holds a valid Connection Competency credential, referred to as the “triple-C.”

“We were spending thousands of dollars to send people to conferences and then hearing, ‘I went to some sessions,’” said one chief learning officer. “The value is often in the conversations. We decided that if networking is part of the business case, people should know how to do it.”

The certification includes a live assessment in which candidates must:

- Sustain a reciprocal professional conversation for at least eight minutes
- Ask meaningful follow-up questions before shifting the conversation back to themselves
- Identify a potential point of mutual value or future connection
- Recall the other participant’s name and one relevant detail 20 minutes later

Candidates must also demonstrate that they can enter an existing conversation, introduce two people who should know each other and follow up after the interaction.

Critics say networking styles differ by culture, personality and neurotype and worry that formal standards could reward one narrow definition of professional interaction. Credential developers say that is exactly why the assessment focuses on outcomes rather than charisma.

Wanted: People Who Can Think Outside of the Machine

Companies Are Slowly Rebuilding a Capability They Didn’t Realize They Were Losing

The position did not exist three years ago. Now Amwell Systems employs 14 of them. Officially, they are Senior Independent Reasoning Fellows. Everyone in the company calls them the Elders.

Most are over 60. Several had retired. None are prohibited from using artificial intelligence, but each spends designated parts of the week working without it. Their job is not to produce answers faster. It is to notice when everyone else is asking the wrong question.

“We had become incredibly good at getting to an answer quickly,” said Amwell CEO Priya Shah. “What we were losing was the ability to sit with ambiguity long enough to realize the answer might not matter.” Amwell is one of a growing number of companies creating protected roles for workers whose value lies in institutional memory, skepticism, lateral reasoning, judgment and the ability to work through unfamiliar problems without immediately delegating the thinking.

Titles such as Reasoning Lead, Human Judgment Advisor or Cognitive Independence Fellow are starting to appear more regularly. Many require a CIT. The Certified Independent Thinker assessment gives candidates a complex problem, three hours, a blank notebook, and no network connection. Candidates are not scored primarily on whether they reach the correct answer. Reviewers examine how they frame the problem, test assumptions, identify missing information, change their minds, and explain uncertainty.

The irony is difficult to miss. For decades, workers earned credentials to prove they could use the newest tools. Now some are earning one to prove they can still work without them.



Special Report: The Credential That Let Them Leave Medicine

A new breed of skills verifier is sending doctors and nurses into careers no one expected — and the certification boards weren’t part of the conversation

For 19 years, Renée Tremblay’s job was to notice things before they became emergencies. A creeping heart rate. A family member’s tone. The one alarm that mattered among the forty that didn’t. Today she notices aircraft.



Renée Tremblay, former ICU nurse, now a drone corridor supervisor.

Tremblay, 47, supervises an autonomous air corridor for Southern Ontario’s urban air mobility network, overseeing roughly 600 delivery and medical-transport drones over the Golden Horseshoe. She has no aviation degree. What she has is a credential from Keel, a four-year-old skills-verification platform that told her, and her employer, she was already qualified.

“I left the ICU because I was done. Completely done,” Tremblay said. “I assumed that meant starting over at zero. Keel showed me I was starting at seventy.”

Keel is one of a handful of companies moving into territory once held by professional certification boards. Rather than testing what practitioners know, it verifies what employers increasingly say they need: durable skills, the capabilities that outlast any single job or technology, such as judgment under pressure, clear communication, and the ability to coordinate a team when information is incomplete. Candidates spend about 30 hours in AI-run simulations and consent to analysis of their verified work records. The platform then maps their results against thousands of roles. For clinicians, the maps are often surprising.

Tremblay’s showed near-total overlap with air traffic supervision: sustained vigilance across many data streams, rapid prioritization, and structured handoffs. “A nursing handoff is basically a flight handoff,” her supervisor said.



Dr. Daniel Reyes, former hospitalist, now leads battery failure investigations.

In Phoenix, Dr. Daniel Reyes, 53, took a different road out. A hospitalist for two decades, he watched diagnostic AI absorb most of the reasoning work that defined his day. “I wasn’t burned out. I was redundant in the parts I loved,” he said.

His Keel map pointed to failure investigation. He now leads root-cause analysis for battery recalls at an electric vehicle manufacturer.

“A thermal event in a battery pack is a differential diagnosis,” Reyes said. “You take a history, you rule things out, you resist the obvious answer. The patient just doesn’t talk back.” Keel says it issued 1.9 million credentials last year, about 160,000 of them to health workers. More than 4,000 employers now accept them in place of degree requirements. The company, backed by a consortium of insurers and logistics firms, did not consult any health professions certification body when designing its assessments.

“We didn’t see why we would,” said Priya Nandakumar, Keel’s chief assessment officer. “They certify what you can do inside a profession. We certify what you can do anywhere.”

Not everyone is celebrating. The chief executive of a U.S. specialty certification board, who asked not to be named because of ongoing partnership talks with Keel, called the model “competency without accountability.”

“We have psychometric standards, public members on our boards, due process for candidates,” the executive said. “Who governs Keel? Its investors.”

Then, after a pause: “The problem is that employers stopped asking that question about five years ago.”

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The Future of Competence, By the Numbers

A look at the credentialing landscape

- 82%** — Employers now using continuous performance data, rather than annual reviews, to evaluate workforce competence.
- 47%** — Professionals who say they have earned a credential they cannot fully explain to their employer.
- \$18.6 billion** — Estimated global market for AI-powered competency assessment and credential verification platforms.
- 71%** — Credentialing organizations incorporating workplace performance data into certification or recertification decisions.
- 3 in 5** — Workers who believe AI should be required to demonstrate competence before being trusted with high-stakes decisions.

Special Report: How One Athletic Trainer’s Milestone Signals a New Era in Certification

A Credentialing Milestone

On a March morning in 2035, Parker opened her professional dashboard to discover she was the 20,000th person credentialed as an Athletic Trainer (AT) through an evidence-rich eligibility model. She was also the first to qualify through an adaptive pathway recognizing capabilities developed through education, supervised practice, verified experience and simulation.

For credentialing professionals, the milestone was not about technology. Digital credentials, competency maps and AI-supported assessments had been evolving for years. The breakthrough was a system capable of recognizing readiness through valid, current and verified evidence while maintaining public protection.

Why Parker’s Pathway Matters

Parker’s pathway did not trade rigor for flexibility. It replaced one prescribed route with a governed model evaluating multiple forms of evidence against the same competency framework. Her military experience was translated into civilian competencies, supervised practice was verified and simulations demonstrated judgment, communication, ethics and safety.

The question was no longer whether Parker followed the traditional sequence, but whether her evidence demonstrated readiness for safe, effective practice. Credentialing had moved from recognizing pathways to recognizing competence.

Remember When Eligibility Was a Fixed Path?

For decades, certification followed a familiar formula: complete prescribed education, document required hours and pass a high-stakes exam. The model provided consistency but often treated the pathway as a proxy for competence. By the mid-2020s, workforce shortages, skills-based hiring, microcredentials, international mobility and changing practice challenged this approach. The mandate remained, but the evidence available to support decisions expanded:

- **AI-supported competency mapping** organized education, experience and assessment results against competency frameworks, helping human reviewers identify gaps and inconsistencies.
- **Personalized pathways** combined accredited coursework, supervised practice, verified experience, prior learning and stackable credentials.
- **Immersive assessments** evaluated judgment, communication, ethics and safety in realistic scenarios.
- **Verified digital credentials** made qualifications portable, transparent and easier to authenticate.
- **Continuous competency verification** identified skill decay, outdated practices and emerging risks.

The Mandate Did Not Change

Despite greater flexibility, credentialing bodies remained responsible for defining competence, verifying evidence, setting defensible standards and protecting the public. Technology improved how evidence was collected and evaluated, but accountability remained with human decision-makers.

Safeguards That Preserve Trust

Validity evidence, psychometric review, bias monitoring, privacy protections, expert oversight, transparent appeals and audit trails ensured alternative pathways remained rigorous, fair and defensible.

How Public Protection Improves

The system produced stronger evidence of competence by evaluating not only what candidates completed, but how they performed in complex, high-stakes situations. Weaknesses in reasoning, communication, ethics or safety could be identified and addressed before certification. Regulators gained clearer evidence, employers could verify capabilities faster and candidates had fairer ways to demonstrate readiness. Most importantly, the public gained greater confidence that certification reflected current, demonstrated competence.

Parker’s Milestone Is Bigger Than Parker

Parker’s achievement reflected 15 years of evolution in athletic training certification. Her credential demonstrated that competence could be recognized through different pathways without compromising standards, oversight or accountability.

The milestone was not about embracing technology for its own sake. It marked a smarter, fairer and more responsive approach to eligibility, one that strengthened credentialing decisions and better protected the public it was created to serve.

The Signals Behind the Milestone

Verified digital credentials

- **What It Shows:** Education, experience and assessment evidence can be authenticated instantly.
- **Why It Matters:** Reduces credential fraud and helps regulators and employers confirm qualifications quickly.

Competency-based eligibility records

- **What It Shows:** Candidates demonstrate readiness through mapped skills rather than one fixed pathway.
- **Why It Matters:** Creates richer evidence of competence before independent practice.

Simulation-based assessment

- **What It Shows:** High-risk decisions, communication, ethics and adaptability can be evaluated safely.
- **Why It Matters:** Identifies performance concerns before they affect patients, clients or the public.

Continuous competency verification

- **What It Shows:** Professional readiness is periodically reaffirmed as practice changes.
- **Why It Matters:** Reduces risk from outdated skills and improves responsiveness to emerging standards.

Colleges to Stop Asking Whether Students Used AI

New academic integrity rules focus on a harder question: What was the student supposed to prove?

For most of the last decade, schools tried to answer a deceptively simple question: Did the student use artificial intelligence? This year, 24 colleges stopped asking.

Under a new academic integrity framework adopted this fall, AI use is no longer automatically classified as acceptable or prohibited. Instead, instructors must identify what an assignment is intended to prove which forms of assistance are consistent with that goal.

A statistics student may be required to use AI because effective use of the technology is now part of professional competence.

A nursing student may use AI to organize a case history but still be required to make the final clinical judgment independently.

A philosophy student may be given 90 minutes, a blank notebook and no device because the assignment is specifically designed to assess sustained reasoning.

The framework has introduced three categories.

- **AI-integrated** assessments measure a candidate’s ability to work effectively with AI.
- **AI-disclosed** assessments allow approved tools but require candidates to document how they were used.
- **Human-independent** assessments measure what a person can do without machine assistance.

The shift has also produced cases that would have sounded absurd five years ago. At one university, students lost points for completing an AI-integrated assignment without using the required model. The assignment was meant to measure their ability to evaluate, challenge, and improve machine-generated work.

At another, three students were disciplined for using real-time AI coaching during an assessment of listening and conflict resolution. The students argued that AI coaching is available in the workplace and therefore should have been allowed. The faculty disagreed.

If a credential says someone can perform a task with AI, using AI may be entirely appropriate. If it says someone can think, decide, communicate or act independently, the rules may be very different.

One Professional. Two Certification Standards. No Clear Answer.

A recertification dispute has become the first major test of a fragmented global standards system.

A healthcare professional licensed to practice in three countries has been cleared for recertification in North America but denied the same credential in Europe, despite both certification bodies reviewing data collected from the same individual.

The dispute centers on a new approach to recertification that relies on continuous performance data rather than periodic examinations. Wearable technology, patient outcomes, workplace observations and AI-assisted performance assessments now provide certification bodies with ongoing evidence of professional competence.

The North American system determined that the professional met its requirements for continued competence. The European system reached a different conclusion, citing insufficient evidence of independent clinical judgment and raising questions about how AI-assisted decisions were evaluated.

Both standards are recognized. Both were developed through formal processes. Both claim to protect patients. They reached different conclusions.

The professional argues that meeting one recognized standard should demonstrate competence across borders. Certification bodies disagree, maintaining that the evidence required to demonstrate competence can differ even when the underlying skills are similar.

The case exposes a growing challenge for credentialing organizations. As recertification moves toward continuous assessment, the question is no longer simply whether professionals have maintained their knowledge. It is how to interpret an expanding collection of data about how they actually perform their jobs.

One proposal calls for international agreement on the types of evidence that can demonstrate continued competence. Another would require greater transparency when recognized standards reach different conclusions about the same individual.

For now, one professional remains competent under one system and not the other.



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The Robot Passed the Empathy Exam. The Nurses Walked Out.

When California enacted the Compassionate Care Assurance Act, lawmakers thought they were addressing a human workforce problem. Beginning this year, professionals providing unsupervised elder and home care must demonstrate competence in empathetic communication, emotional de-escalation and patient-centered decision-making. Everyone was on board, until the robots applied.

CareCompanion model HC-8 became the first autonomous home-care system to earn the state-recognized empathy credential last month. Its scores exceeded the human average in four of the five measured categories. The system recognized distress cues, adjusted its tone, allowed patients additional response time, recalled personal preferences and correctly identified moments when clinical efficiency should yield to emotional reassurance.



It’s set off a real debate about what empathy means and who is qualified to provide it.

Hundreds of nurses, home-health workers and patient advocates gathered outside the state capitol Tuesday carrying signs reading **CARE IS A RELATIONSHIP** and **SIMULATION IS NOT COMPASSION**.

“If empathy is a set of observable behaviors, then yes, the robot demonstrated them,” said labor organizer Elena Shaw. “But most people do not believe care is only a set of behaviors.”

Manufacturers say that distinction misses the point. “We have standards for care and we are meeting them,” said an HC-8 executive. “Patients experience excellent care when our companions listen, recognize distress, and respond appropriately. And we can measure this in real time.”

The credentialing board has been careful in its wording. It does not certify that HC-8 feels empathy. It certifies that the system can demonstrate defined empathetic-care behaviors to a required standard.

Leaked Information Brings Ethics Badges into Question

Investors demand answers after allegations of misconduct raise questions about the company's widely promoted Ethics Verified workforce.

For three years, Meridian Global proudly displayed the number on its careers page: *98% of employees Ethics Verified*. The company encouraged clients to look for the green EV badge beside employee profiles. Executives highlighted the credential in investor presentations, and procurement teams included it in vendor proposals. It was a key differentiator, until leaked internal documents sent shareholders into an uproar.

The documents revealed that two Ethics Verified employees had altered internal reports to exaggerate progress on their division's product pipeline. An internal investigation was already underway, but the controversy became public when the documents were leaked to the media. Within days, Meridian's stock had fallen 14%, wiping billions from its market value. Investors accused leadership of misleading shareholders by promoting the credential as evidence of an ethical corporate culture.

A group of institutional shareholders is now demanding an independent investigation into Meridian's credentialing claims, while others are calling for executive accountability.

"We invested in a company that told us ethical behavior was a competitive advantage," said one shareholder representative. "Now we're learning that the badge may not mean what we thought it meant."

Meridian CEO Marisol Trent defended the program. "We never certified that someone was an ethical person," Trent said. "We certified demonstrated competence in recognizing ethical risks, applying a code of conduct and working through defined ethical decision scenarios." Legally, that distinction may matter. To investors watching the company's value decline, it offers little reassurance.

"You put a green shield next to someone's name and call them Ethics Verified," said one governance researcher. "You cannot be surprised when shareholders assume that person can be trusted."

The controversy has triggered a broader review of behavioral credentials, including badges for empathy, fairness, collaboration, inclusive leadership and responsible AI use.



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