



STANDARDS

For the Accreditation of Certification Programs

**Including
Preamble and Glossary**

and

**Project Donors, 2000 NCCA Commission,
2000 NOCA Board of Directors,
Steering Committee, Task Force Groups**

November 2000

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National Commission For Certifying Agencies

The Accreditation Body of the National Organization for Competency Assurance

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November 30, 2000

Dear NOCA and NCCA Colleagues:

On behalf of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) Board of Directors, and the Standards Revision Project Steering Committee, I am pleased to provide this draft of the revised **Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs** for your review and comment.

As you know, this document and its components represent months of work by many individuals from diverse professions. The Steering Committee, which was convened under the auspices of NCCA, undertook supervision of the Standards Revision Project and subsequently appointed four task forces to work on revisions to the standards with respect to the following areas: *Purpose, Governance, and Resources; Responsibilities to Stakeholders; Assessment Instruments; and Recertification*. These task forces generated the first iteration of draft standards for submission to the Steering Committee, which then refined the components into a single document for review by the NCCA Commission, the NOCA Board of Directors, and members of the Project Steering Committee. Feedback was then incorporated into the current draft document.

Please read the document in its entirety. It consists of the following components:

- Preamble**, describing Project beginnings and assumptions
- Standards**, 21 in all, with accompanying Essential Elements and Commentary sections
- Glossary** of terms
- Donors** to the Standards Revision Project
- NCCA Commission, NOCA Board, Steering Committee, and Task Force** lists

Written feedback sections follow each of the 21 Standards and are also placed at the bottom of each page of the Glossary. Please provide your feedback directly on this document and return it to the address provided at the end of this letter. **The deadline for initial feedback is January 31, 2001.**

A public Forum is being planned for February 2001 to discuss the draft Standards, the rationale for each Standard, and the draft implementation plan. Sessions at the Forum will address the evolution of professional certification and several key legal issues. We encourage your attendance at this event and kindly request that you participate in the conversation about this work, its impact, and its professional relevance to our stakeholders and our organizations.

Widespread interest and input have constructively brought this body of work to its present stage. We appreciate the commitment of the organizations and individuals who enabled this initiative to move forward. The proposed new Standards should continue to serve the certification communities of interest for the foreseeable future, and they reflect the changing face of certification in our society.

Thank you in advance for your continuing support of the Standards Revision Project and for the constructive comments you will provide to this first public draft document. Your patience and dedication to this work are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Gary A. Smith
Chairman, NCCA

Feedback Procedure

Feedback may be submitted via regular mail or fax as outlined below.

If you have questions, please use the email address or phone number provided. An electronic form for comment will soon be available on the NOCA/NCCA Website.

Please forward your comments to—

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PREAMBLE

INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) currently accredits certification organizations complying with its Standards. NCCA Standards address the structure and governance of the certifying agency, the characteristics of the certification program, the information required to be available to applicants, certificants, and the public, and the recertification initiatives of the certifying agency. NCCA is a separately governed accreditation arm of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), a membership association of certification organizations providing technical and educational information concerning certification practices.

Since the Standards were first issued in the late 1970s, NCCA has observed fundamental changes in the nature, scope, and importance of certification. First, the certification community has expanded dramatically to include a broader variety of occupational and professional credentials offered by non-profit organizations, for-profit entities, governmental agencies, and industries. Second, it is increasingly common for a certification organization to offer multiple certification programs. Third, the certification community has expanded internationally. Fourth, the certification and testing communities have introduced the computer as a means of both developing items and new assessment formats, as well as administering assessments. This change has also led to the implementation of modern testing methodologies to capitalize on the power of the computer to score and scale the assessment instruments. Fifth, an increasing number of certification programs are endorsed by state and provincial regulatory authorities, a practice that expands the traditional definition of certification.

In 1997, NCCA established two Task Forces to address the feasibility of revising the accreditation Standards to address the changes described above and to ensure the currency of the Standards for the foreseeable future. The Task Forces were eventually combined at the end of 1997 to form a Steering Committee.

In August 1998, NCCA obtained approval from the NOCA Board of Directors to conduct fundraising activities in support of the continued work of the Steering Committee. As an outcome of this effort, NCCA hired an independent project manager.

During 1999 and early 2000 the Steering Committee conducted activities through the formation of four Task Forces, each focusing on a different set of accreditation standards: (1) Purpose, Governance, and Resources (2) Responsibilities to Stakeholders (3) Assessment Mechanisms, and (4) Recertification. The Task Forces represented a cross section of currently accredited groups, testing services, and other professionals with expertise in certification.

Members of the Steering Committee and the Task Forces reported to NCCA in November, 1999, and to the NOCA Board and Membership in December, 1999. A complete report of the Standards Revision Project was prepared and submitted to NCCA by the Steering Committee in March, 2000. The proposed Standards and related material contained herein are the outcomes of NCCA review and revision of the Steering

42 Committee's report. A draft of these documents was also reviewed by the NOCA Board
43 of Directors.

44 **STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED STANDARDS**

45 The proposed Standards focus on certification programs and are organized into five
46 sections: (1) Purpose, Governance, and Resources, containing five Standards
47 (2) Responsibilities to Stakeholders, containing four Standards (3) Assessment
48 Instruments, containing nine Standards (4) Recertification, containing two Standards,
49 and (5) Maintaining Accreditation, containing one Standard.

50 To earn or maintain accreditation by NCCA, the certification program must meet *all*
51 Standards and provide evidence of compliance through the submission of required
52 documentation.

53 The statements describing the proposed Standards are numbered consecutively.
54 Assuming the Standards are approved by the accredited member organizations of NOCA,
55 these statements will be implemented without change until the next revision of Standards
56 is undertaken. Accompanying each Standard are *Essential Elements*, which are directly
57 related to the Standard and specify what a certification program must do to fulfill
58 requirements of the Standard.

59 A second subsection under each Standard is called *Commentary*. The Commentary
60 section clarifies terms, provides examples of practice that help explain a Standard, or
61 offers suggestions regarding evidence that must be documented to demonstrate
62 compliance. NCCA reserves the right to revise the Essential Elements and the
63 Commentary sections in response to changes in certification practice.

64 The development of the Standards was guided by the following assumptions:

- 65 1. A number of current NCCA Standards, such as the requirement that the certifying
66 agency be non-governmental, nonprofit, and national in scope, are restrictive.
- 67 2. The appropriate unit of accreditation is the certification program rather than the
68 certifying organization.
- 69 3. NCCA accreditation should be awarded for a uniform period of five years.
- 70 4. Autonomy in the management and administration of certification is required to serve
71 stakeholder interests. However, since certification is constituted to serve a variety of
72 purposes, a variety of structures may be effectively employed to prevent undue
73 influence from competing interests.
- 74 5. The term stakeholder has been used to refer to candidates and the public, as well as to
75 members of a profession or regulatory body, depending on the certified profession or
76 occupation. The term also encompasses certificants and the entities offering
77 certification, as well as educators, members of the profession, and employers. It is
78 appropriate to acknowledge the legitimate influence of all stakeholder bodies.
- 79 6. The proposed NCCA Standards pertaining to assessment instruments should be
80 consistent with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American

- 81 Educational Research Association, 1999), as well as other standards and guidelines
82 related to certification.
- 83 7. Recertification is valuable for all certification programs. However, in emerging
84 certification programs oriented to competence in the use or maintenance of particular
85 products and offered under for-profit arrangements, continuing competence may be
86 driven by new releases of the products and requirements for new certification based
87 on the new releases.
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STANDARDS

88 **PURPOSE, GOVERNANCE, and RESOURCES**

89 **Standard 1**

90 **The purpose of the certification program is to conduct certification**
91 **activities in a manner that upholds standards for competent practice in**
92 **the profession, occupation, role, or for the use or support of a product.**

93 *Essential Element:*

94 A. It is the responsibility of the certification program applying for NCCA
95 accreditation to identify the population being certified and to provide justification
96 for the appropriateness of its certification activities. Typically, a certification
97 program issues a credential or title to those certified. If the applying program does
98 not, an explanation should be provided explaining why the issuance of a
99 credential or title is not appropriate to the profession, occupation, role, or for the
100 use or support of a product.

101 *Commentary:*

102 A. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
103 mission statement, bylaws, articles of incorporation, a policy and procedures
104 document, an advisory committee charter, or candidate brochures.

Feedback comments for Standard 1 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

Standard 2

105 **The certification program must be structured and governed in ways**
106 **that are appropriate for the profession, occupation, role, or for the use**
107 **or support of a product and that ensure an appropriate level of**
108 **autonomy in decision making over essential certification activities.**

109 *Essential Elements:*

- 110 A. The certifying program must show that the governance structure, policies, and
111 procedures that have been established protect against undue influence that could
112 compromise the integrity of the certification process.
- 113 B. The governance structure, policies, and procedures must provide for autonomy in
114 decision making regarding important aspects of the certification program, such as
115 eligibility standards; the development, administration, and scoring of the
116 assessment instruments; selection of personnel; and operational processes.
- 117 C. Eligibility standards must be consistent for all applicants.
- 118 D. The development, administration, and scoring of assessment instruments must
119 promote the purpose of the certification program.
- 120 E. To avoid conflicts of interest between certification and education functions,
121 individuals involved in decision making for certification programs should not also
122 be responsible for decisions regarding the development or accreditation of
123 educational or training programs or courses of study related to the purpose of the
124 credential.

125 *Commentary:*

- 126 A. The appropriate structure and governance of a certification program will reflect
127 the interests of the general public in the credential. In traditional forms of
128 professional or occupational certification, public interest requires direct protection
129 of essential certification decisions from undue influence. Such protection is
130 especially important when a certification program is sponsored by a professional
131 membership association or proprietary entity. In these cases it is appropriate that
132 the certification program's structure and governance protect the integrity of
133 essential certification decisions.

134 When the certification program involves a proprietary product or service, the
135 issue of undue influence is different. In these cases it is assumed that the
136 proprietor has a clear and reasonable self- interest in preventing external or
137 competing influences from diminishing the quality of the certification. It is
138 recognized that the public is often not a direct consumer of the activities of the
139 certified population. The public interest will be adequately protected when the
140 needs of the proprietor, employers, or purchasers who rely on the credential
141 provide significant direction over certification policy and decision making.

- 142 B. Pressure to adjust certification standards either to limit the number of certificants
143 or to reduce or elevate the established standard by changing requirements could
144 interfere with the maintenance of standards established for a given certification.

- 145 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
 146 mission statement, bylaws, articles of incorporation, business plans, a policy and
 147 procedures document, an advisory committee charter, or organizational charts.

Feedback comments for Standard 2 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

148 **Standard 3**

149 **The certification board or advisory committee of the certification**
 150 **program must include individuals from the population being certified,**
 151 **as well as representation from appropriate stakeholders. For entities**
 152 **offering more than one certification program, a system must be in place**
 153 **through which all certified populations are represented on the**
 154 **certification board or advisory committee.**

155 ***Essential Elements:***

- 156 A. A system or structure must be established for ensuring appropriate stakeholder
 157 involvement, either by designating certain representative positions or by
 158 implementing a rotating system of representation over a set period of time.
- 159 B. The certification program must establish bylaws and/or policies and procedures
 160 for the selection of individuals who serve on the board or advisory committee.
 161 This information must show that the selection of these individuals prevents
 162 inappropriate influence from a parent or outside body.

163 ***Commentary:***

- 164 A. It is important that all appropriate stakeholders (e.g., certificants, consumers,
 165 public, employers, regulators) are represented on the body(ies) that sets policies
 166 regarding the certification program, including activities related to eligibility and
 167 the development, administration, and scoring of the assessment instrument.
- 168 B. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
 169 mission statement, bylaws, articles of incorporation, business plans, a policy and
 170 procedures document, an advisory committee charter, or organizational charts.

183 **Standard 5**

184 **The certification program must have sufficient staff, consultants, and**
185 **other human resources to conduct effective certification and**
186 **recertification activities.**

187 *Essential Elements:*

- 188 A. Key staff and non-staff consultants and professionals must possess adequate
189 knowledge and skill to conduct certification program activities.
- 190 B. The certification program must have adequate resources to conduct the activities
191 (e.g., processing of applications, administering the assessment instrument, storage
192 of records) of the certification program.

193 *Commentary:*

- 194 A. Documentation of resource availability and activity occurrence does not mean that
195 every certification program must have its own office or building; in some cases,
196 all activities could be adequately handled with services from a testing company,
197 consultants, or management service.
- 198 B. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include
199 resumes or curriculum vitae of key staff, non-staff consultants, and professionals,
200 and associated organizational charts describing the inter-relationships among the
201 individuals providing services to the certification program.

Feedback comments for Standard 5 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

202 **RESPONSIBILITIES TO STAKEHOLDERS**

203 **Standard 6**

204 **A certification program must establish, publish, apply, and periodically**
205 **review key certification policies and procedures concerning existing and**
206 **prospective certificants, such as those for determining eligibility**
207 **criteria, application for certification, administering assessment**
208 **instruments, establishing performance domains, appeals,**
209 **confidentiality, certification statistics, discipline, and compliance with**
210 **applicable laws.**

211 *Essential Elements:*

- 212 A. A published document which clearly defines certification responsibilities of the
213 organization must include the following:
- 214 • The purpose of the certification program
 - 215 • Eligibility criteria and application policies and procedures
 - 216 • Materials outlining all examination processes and procedures
 - 217 • A detailed listing and/or outline of the performance domains, tasks, and
218 associated knowledge and/or skills
 - 219 • A summary of certification activities for each program
 - 220 • Discipline, nondiscrimination, and confidentiality policies and procedures
 - 221 • Appeals policies and procedures
- 222 B. Confidentiality policies must (a) ensure that candidate application status and
223 examination results are held confidential, and (b) delineate the circumstances
224 under which this information may be disclosed or made public.
- 225 C. Policies and procedures must be published and must include guidelines by which
226 candidates may question eligibility determination, assessment instrument results,
227 and certification status.
- 228 D. Disciplinary policies must include procedures to address complaints which may
229 concern conduct that is harmful to the public or inappropriate to the discipline
230 (e.g., incompetence, unethical behavior, or physical/mental impairment affecting
231 performance). These policies must ensure appropriate treatment of sensitive
232 information and fair decision making.

233 *Commentary:*

- 234 A. Publications concerning eligibility criteria, applications, assessment instruments,
235 appeals, discipline, confidentiality, etc., are required to inform candidates and
236 other stakeholders about program policies.

- 237 B. Applicable laws and regulations include nondiscrimination, disabilities, and other
238 issues which may affect fairness to candidates or protection for consumers.
- 239 C. Procedures for requesting accommodations for disabled candidates should be
240 stated clearly and published in an appropriate agency document. The process
241 should include mechanisms that will ensure that proper evidence is submitted to
242 the agency to assist the agency in making a determination regarding the requested
243 accommodation.
- 244 D. Any accommodation provided should be reasonable and not compromise the
245 validity and reliability of the assessment instruments.
- 246 E. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
247 policy and procedures manual, a candidate handbook, and any written documents
248 or forms regarding procedures for obtaining approval for an accommodation.

Feedback comments for Standard 6 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

249 **Standard 7**

250 **The certification program must publish a description of the assessment**
251 **instruments used to make certification decisions as well as the research**
252 **methods used to ensure that the assessment instruments are valid.**

253 *Essential Element:*

- 254 A. Procedures related to assessment instruments must address development and
255 validation, eligibility requirements, and administration (e.g., availability and
256 location, fees, reporting of results).

257 *Commentary:*

- 258 A. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
259 candidate handbook, brochures about the certification program, and other public
260 documents.

272 **Standard 9**

273 **The certification program must maintain a list and provide verification**
274 **of certified individuals.**

275 *Essential Element:*

276 A. The certification program must maintain a list of current and previous certificants.

277 *Commentary:*

278 A. The certification program should provide and verify that a certificant possesses
279 currently valid certification upon request from any member of the public. Policies
280 governing verification should allow disclosure of whether or not the certificant is
281 currently in good standing, without communicating other information which may
282 violate the confidentiality rights of certificants or applicants.

283 B. The certification program may discard information about previous certificants
284 after a reasonable time period when such information is no longer valuable to the
285 certification program’s stakeholders.

286 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include a
287 policy and procedures document, a candidate handbook, brochures about the
288 certification program, directories in which certificant names are published, and
289 other public documents.

Feedback comments for Standard 9 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

290 ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

291 **Standard 10**

292 **The certification program must analyze, define, and publish**
293 **performance domains and tasks related to the purpose of the credential,**
294 **and the knowledge and/or skill associated with the performance**
295 **domains and tasks, and use them to develop specifications for the**
296 **assessment instruments.**

297 *Essential Elements:*

- 298 A. A job/practice analysis must be conducted leading to clearly delineated
299 performance domains and tasks, associated knowledge and/or skills, and sets of
300 content/item specifications to be used as the basis for developing each type of
301 assessment instrument (e.g., multiple-choice, essay, oral examination).
- 302 B. A report must be published linking the job/practice analysis to specifications for
303 the assessment instruments.

304 *Commentary:*

- 305 A. No single method exists to define performance domains, tasks, and associated
306 knowledge and/or skills. Appropriate strategies include (a) committees of
307 representative experts to define performance domains and tasks and associated
308 knowledge and/or skills, including a review of related practice- or job-based
309 information, or a review of the information from a previous study (b) rating
310 scales (e.g., frequency and importance) to identify and select critical performance
311 domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills (c) collection of
312 job/practice information using logs, observations of practice, and/or interviews, or
313 (d) review of proposed performance domains, tasks, associated knowledge and/or
314 skills, and rating scales by an independent panel of experts.
- 315 B. Validation of performance domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills
316 is typically accomplished by conducting a survey of current certificants and/or
317 individuals providing services or performing a job consistent with the purpose of
318 the credential. It is important to sample widely within the profession, occupation,
319 or role, or among those who use or support a product, to ensure representation in
320 terms of major practice areas, job titles, work settings, geography, ethnic
321 diversity, gender, and work experience. Stakeholders such as educators,
322 supervisors, and employers may be included, as appropriate. An adequate sample
323 size should be used to ensure that the estimated level of measurement error is
324 defensible.
- 325 C. Analysis of ratings information collected in the survey should determine how and
326 to what degree the performance domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or
327 skills relate to the purpose of the credential. Linkages to the content of the
328 assessment instruments should be based on the use of ratings data. Empirical
329 algorithms or other psychometric methods used to analyze or combine ratings

- 330 from different scales should be specified. Analyses of demographic information
331 collected from survey participants should also be examined to evaluate
332 representativeness of the findings.
- 333 D. A table of specifications should be prepared for each assessment instrument
334 specifying the weighting of performance domains, tasks, and associated
335 knowledge and/or skills to be included. The weighting system should be based
336 primarily on data collected from survey participants, with informed review and
337 interpretation provided by a panel of subject-matter experts. Decision rules used
338 to eliminate performance domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills
339 from the specification table should be explained. The specifications may also
340 include instructions to the item writers to be used in developing assessment
341 instruments.
- 342 E. Because rapid changes may occur in knowledge and/or skills and in technology, it
343 is important that certification programs periodically review performance domains,
344 tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills in the specifications to ensure that
345 they are current. Since it is impossible to specify with precision how often the
346 review should be conducted, each certification agency should develop its own
347 timeframe and rationale. For existing certification programs, any changes between
348 new specifications and previous specifications should be noted and explained.
- 349 F. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met requires a
350 complete report summarizing the results of the job/practice analysis, which may
351 include:
- 352 • A description of the background and experience of subject-matter experts and
353 professionals who participated in various phases of the job/practice analysis
 - 354 • Identification of the psychometric consultants or organization used to conduct
355 the job/practice analysis or important phases of it
 - 356 • A description of methods used to delineate performance domains, tasks, and
357 associated knowledge and/or skills
 - 358 • A copy of the job analysis survey, including all instructions, rating scales,
359 open-ended questions, and background demographic information collected
360 from participants
 - 361 • A description of the survey's sampling plan and its rationale
 - 362 • Documentation of survey results, including return rate, analysis of ratings
363 data, algorithms or other psychometric methods used to analyze or combine
364 ratings data, and a rationale supporting representativeness of survey findings
 - 365 • A table of specifications for each assessment instrument specifying weighting
366 of the performance domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skill,
367 along with any decision rules used to eliminate any of these elements from the
368 table of specifications
 - 369 • Date of the study and description of a plan to update periodically the
370 job/practice analysis

Feedback comments for Standard 10 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

371 **Standard 11**

372 **The certification program must employ assessment instruments that are**
 373 **derived from the job/practice analysis and that are consistent with**
 374 **generally accepted psychometric principles.**

375 *Essential Elements:*

- 376 A. Assessment instruments, including assessment items, exhibits, instructions to
 377 examinees, scoring procedures, and training procedures for administration of
 378 assessments, must be products of an appropriately disciplined and documented
 379 development process.
- 380 B. The content sampling plan for test items or other assessment components must
 381 correspond to content as delineated and specified in the job/practice analysis.
- 382 C. An ongoing process must exist to ensure that linkage between the assessment
 383 instruments and the job/practice analysis is maintained, as assessment components
 384 are revised and replaced over time. This linkage between assessment content and
 385 job/practice analysis must be documented and available for review by
 386 stakeholders.
- 387 D. Certification programs must follow a valid development process that is
 388 appropriate for assessment instruments.
- 389 E. A systematic plan must be created and implemented to minimize the impact of
 390 content error and bias on the assessment development process. Assessment
 391 content must be reviewed by qualified subject matter experts.

392 *Commentary:*

- 393 A. Documentation for assessments should include a detailed description of the
 394 delivery format for each portion of the assessment and the type of response
 395 required of candidates. Developers should take reasonable steps to ensure that
 396 modes of presentation and response are justified by job relatedness. If the form of
 397 the assessment instrument is to be delivered on computer, the documentation of

- 398 item selection rules or display features should be described. Certification
- 399 programs should document how background and experience factors of the
- 400 candidate population were considered in selecting item types or other assessment
- 401 formats.
- 402 B. Qualifications of subject matter experts, assessment development professionals,
- 403 content reviewers, and others involved in assessment development should be
- 404 appropriate to the content area tested and assessment procedures used and
- 405 documented.
- 406 C. Training provided to item writers, item reviewers, and others who produce
- 407 assessment content should be structured, delivered, and documented in a
- 408 professional and consistent manner.
- 409 D. The development and assembly process for assessment instruments should be
- 410 documented.
- 411 E. The development process should include pilot testing of new items with a
- 412 representative sample of the target population, with revision based on statistical
- 413 analysis of results, where appropriate.
- 414 F. Certification programs should document procedures used to examine the
- 415 performance of items or other assessment components and describe the criteria
- 416 used to identify components for revision or removal from the assessment.
- 417 G. The size of the item pool must be sufficient to sample specifications for the
- 418 assessment and to provide adequate item exposure control to safeguard the
- 419 security and integrity of the item bank and test forms, particularly in relation to
- 420 computer-based administration.
- 421 H. Provision should be made for monitoring continued validity of each assessment
- 422 item and assessment form during the period in which they are active.
- 423 I. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include:
- 424 specifications for the assessment instruments; training materials, agendas, and
- 425 reports on item development; procedures for the development of assessment
- 426 instruments; and technical reports.

Feedback comments for Standard 11 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

Standard 12

The certification program must set the cut score consistent with the purpose of the credential and the established standard of competence for the profession, occupation, role, or for the use or support of a product.

Essential Elements:

- A. Cut scores must be set using information concerning the relationship between assessment performance and relevant criteria based on the standard of competence.
- B. A report must be published documenting the methods and procedures used to establish the standard of competence and set the cut score, along with the results of these procedures.

Commentary:

- A. No single method exists to set cut scores. Appropriate strategies include the use of judges or panelists who focus their attention on assessment content by rating each item or task, or who consider the candidates or their completed assessments.
- B. The raters in a cut score study must understand the purpose of the assessment, the standard of competence, and how to apply the cut score process that is to be used. Raters should have a sound basis for making required judgments. If data are available, estimates of the effects of setting the cut score at various points should be provided.
- C. The cut score study should be documented in sufficient detail to allow for replication, including full descriptions of the procedures followed, results, and how they should be interpreted.
- D. Suggested evidence to document that the standard has been met includes a report of the cut score study that addresses the following:
- Overview of the cut score process
 - Qualifications of those designing and implementing the process
 - Number of panelists, manner of selecting the panelists, and their qualifications
 - Material used
 - Data collection procedures
 - Descriptions or conceptualizations developed by the panelists
 - Data collection activities
 - Meeting agendas
 - Any adjustments made to the cut score by a governing body or policy group

Feedback comments for Standard 12 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

464 **Standard 13**

465 **The certification program must document the psychometric procedures**
 466 **used to score, interpret, and report assessment results.**

467 *Essential Elements:*

- 468 A. The certification program must describe procedures for scoring, interpreting, and
 469 reporting assessment results.
- 470 B. For responses scored by judgment, developers must document training materials
 471 and standards for training judges to an acceptable level of valid and reliable
 472 performance. Any prerequisite background or experience for selection of judges
 473 must also be specified.
- 474 C. Candidates must be provided meaningful information on their performance on
 475 assessment instruments. Such information must enable failing candidates to
 476 benefit from the information and, if psychometrically defensible, understand their
 477 strengths and weaknesses as measured by the assessment instruments.
- 478 D. Reports of aggregate assessment data in summarized form must be made available
 479 to stakeholders without violating confidentiality obligations.

480 *Commentary:*

- 481 A. Certification programs are responsible for establishing quality control procedures
 482 that regularly monitor the precision of calculations used to compute assessment
 483 scores and their conversion to standardized, equated, or scaled scores, if
 484 performed.
- 485 B. The certification program should publish an explanation of the appropriate uses
 486 and misuses of reported score information.
- 487 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include
 488 descriptions of scoring procedures, training documents, quality control
 489 procedures, and sample score reports for passing and failing candidates.

Feedback comments for Standard 13 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

490 **Standard 14**

491 **The certification program must ensure that reported scores are**
 492 **sufficiently reliable for the intended purposes of the assessment**
 493 **instruments.**

494 *Essential Element:*

495 A. Certification programs must provide information to indicate whether scores
 496 (including any subscores) are sufficiently reliable for their intended uses,
 497 including estimates of errors of measurement for the reported scores. Information
 498 must be provided about reliability or consistency of pass/fail decisions. When
 499 appropriate, information should be provided about the standard error of
 500 measurement or similar coefficients around the cut score.

501 *Commentary:*

502 A. The level of reliability required for an assessment instrument depends on the type
 503 of assessment device and the purpose for which scores will be used.

504 B. Different types of assessment instruments require different methods of estimating
 505 reliability. Reliability should be estimated using methods that are appropriate for
 506 characteristics of the assessment instruments and the intended uses of the scores.

507 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include:

- 508 • Methods used to assess reliability of scores (including subscores), and the
 509 rationale for using them
- 510 • Characteristics of the population involved (e.g., demographic information,
 511 employment status)
- 512 • A reliability coefficient, an overall standard error of measurement, an
 513 index of classification consistency, an information function, or other
 514 methods for estimating the consistency of scores
- 515 • Standard errors of measurement or other measures of score consistency
 516 around the cut score

- 542 C. A rationale should be provided for the reporting scales selected and methods used
543 to determine score scales.
- 544 D. The scales on which scores are reported should not encourage finer distinctions
545 among candidates than can be supported by the precision of the assessment
546 instruments. The scale values should be chosen in a manner that avoids confusion
547 with other scales that are widely used by the same population of candidates.
- 548 E. Raw scores should not be reported except under one or more of the following
549 circumstances:
- 550 • Only one form of the assessment instrument is to be offered
 - 551 • Scores on one form will not be compared with scores on another form
 - 552 • Raw or percentage scores on all forms are comparable, or
 - 553 • Raw or percentage scores are reported in a context that supports intended
554 interpretations.
- 555 F. When scaling scores, the stability of the score scale should be checked
556 periodically. When indicated, steps should be taken to minimize score
557 misinterpretations. If a change to the assessment instrument or to the composition
558 of the candidate population alters the meaning of scores, it may be appropriate to
559 rescale the scores to minimize confusion between the old and new scores, or in
560 the absence of rescaling, to ensure that the differences between the old and new
561 scores are clearly communicated to candidates and to other stakeholders.
- 562 G. Certification programs should, whenever possible, conduct tryout studies prior to
563 implementation of the adapted version of the assessment instruments. Field study
564 research should be part of a program of ongoing maintenance and improvement.
565 Tryout and field studies should be part of a larger research program to ensure
566 comparability and quality of cross-cultural information on the assessment
567 instruments.
- 568 H. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include:
- 569 • A description of the methods used to determine that different forms of an
570 assessment instrument measure equivalent content and ensure that candidates
571 are not disadvantaged for taking a form of the assessment instrument that
572 varies in difficulty from another form
 - 573 • An equating and scaling report

Feedback comments for Standard 15 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

574 **Standard 16**

575 **The certification program must develop, publish, and adhere to**
 576 **appropriate, standardized, and secure procedures for the**
 577 **administration of the assessment instruments.**

578 *Essential Element:*

579 A. Assessment instruments must be administered securely using standardized
 580 procedures that have been specified by the certification program sponsor.

581 *Commentary:*

582 A. Non-standardized administration procedures may adversely influence scores as
 583 well as the inferences drawn from these scores. When administration procedures
 584 deviate from the expected, such irregularities must be thoroughly documented.

585 B. Chief examiners and proctors should be thoroughly trained in proper
 586 administration of the assessment instruments in an effort to minimize the
 587 influence of test administration on scores. Similarly, all candidates should have
 588 equal access to preparatory materials and instructions available from the sponsor.

589 C. Certification programs are responsible for protecting the integrity of assessment
 590 information. This responsibility requires a security program that restricts access to
 591 assessment information to authorized personnel.

592 D. Administration sites should offer similar conditions, such as adequate lighting,
 593 comfortable seating, and an environment free from noise and other distraction.

594 E. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met may include:

- 595 • Candidate handbook or similar document
- 596 • Chief examiner and/or proctor manual
- 597 • Quality control policy and procedures documents
- 598 • Security procedures manual

Feedback comments for Standard 16 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

599 **Standard 17**

600 **The certification program must establish and document policies and**
601 **procedures for retaining all information and data required to provide**
602 **evidence of validity and reliability of the assessment instruments.**

603 *Essential Element:*

604 A. Policies and procedures must ensure that items and forms of the assessment
605 instruments are stored in a medium and method that emphasizes security, while
606 being accessible to authorized personnel. Such policies require not only the
607 description of procedures for a secure system but also address actions required of
608 personnel.

609 *Commentary:*

- 610 A. The record for each item should include all information necessary for
611 documentation of validity.
- 612 B. Published policies should establish a time period for retention of physical or
613 electronic copies of forms of the assessment instruments and of reports and
614 analyses related to the development process. The documents may be used in
615 matters relating to challenges concerning scores, validity, or other essential issues.
- 616 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met should include
617 policy and procedures documents.

634 **RECERTIFICATION**635 **Standard 19**

636 **The certification program must establish, publish, apply, and**
 637 **periodically review policies and procedures for recertification.**

638 *Essential Elements:*

- 639 A. The published policy must contain a statement of the basis and purpose for
 640 recertification and all recertification requirements.
- 641 B. The rationale for the recertification time interval must be included in the policy.
- 642 C. Recertification policies and procedures in handbooks, guides, and/or electronic
 643 media must be published and made available to certificants and the public.

644 *Commentary:*

- 645 A. An explanation of consequences for the certificant when recertification
 646 requirements are not met should be provided.
- 647 B. In the case of a certification program involving a proprietary product or service,
 648 the proprietor may describe recertification on the basis of a systematic process of
 649 upgrading the product or service in connection with steps taken to withdraw
 650 technical support provided by the proprietor for the previous version of the
 651 product.
- 652 C. Suggested evidence to document that the Standard has been met should include
 653 certification renewal policy and procedure documents and a candidate handbook.

Feedback comments for Standard 19 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

676 **MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION**

677 **Standard 21**

678 **The certification program must demonstrate continued compliance to**
679 **maintain accreditation.**

680 *Essential Elements:*

681 A. The certification program must annually complete and submit information
682 requested on the current status of the certification agency and its programs.

683 B. The certification program must report any change in purpose, structure, or
684 activities of the certification program.

685 C. The certification program must report any substantive change in examination
686 administration procedures.

687 D. The certification program must report any major change in examination
688 techniques or in the scope or objectives of the examination.

689 E. The certification program must submit any information it may require to
690 investigate allegations of lack of compliance with NCCA Standards.

Feedback comments for Standard 21 only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

714 **Assessment Instruments—**

715 Any one of several standardized methods for determining if candidates possess the
716 necessary knowledge and/or skill related to the purpose of the certification.

717 **Autonomy—**

718 Control over all essential certification and recertification decisions without being subject
719 to approval by or undue influence from any other body. See Administrative
720 Independence.

721 **Bias—**

722 IN THE CONTEXT OF SCORING: a systematic error in a score on an assessment instrument.

723 IN THE CONTEXT OF EXAMINATION FAIRNESS: may refer to the inappropriateness of content
724 in the assessment instrument, either in terms of its irrelevance, overemphasis, or
725 exclusion.

726 IN THE CONTEXT OF ELIGIBILITY AND RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: may refer to the
727 inappropriateness or irrelevance of requirements for certification or recertification if they
728 are not reasonable prerequisites for competence in a profession, occupation, role, or for
729 product use and support. See Fairness.

730 **Candidate—**

731 An individual who has met the eligibility qualifications for, but has not yet earned, a
732 credential awarded through a certification program. See Applicant.

733 **Certificant—**

734 An individual who has earned a credential awarded through a certification program.

735 **Certification—**

736 A process, often voluntary, by which individuals who have demonstrated the level of
737 knowledge and skill required in the profession, occupation, role, or for the competent use
738 or support of a product, are identified to the public and other stakeholders.

Feedback comments this page only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

739 **Certification Agency—**

740 The organizational or administrative unit that sponsors a certification program.

741 **Certification Board—**

742 A group of individuals appointed or elected to govern one or more certification programs
743 as well as the certification agency, and responsible for all certification decision making,
744 including governance.

745 **Certification Committee—**

746 A group of individuals appointed or elected to recommend and implement policy related
747 to certification program operation.

748 **Certification Program—**

749 The standards, policies, procedures, assessment instruments, and related products and
750 activities through which individuals are publicly identified as qualified in a profession,
751 occupation, role, or for the competent use or support of a product.

752 **Commentary—**

753 Comments, remarks, and observations that clarify terms, provide examples of practice
754 that help explain a standard, or offer suggestions regarding evidence that must be
755 documented to demonstrate compliance.

756 **Content Domains—**

757 The set of organized categories characterizing subject matter under which knowledge and
758 skills may be represented in specifications for assessment instruments.

759 **Continuing Competence—**

760 The ability to provide service at specified levels of knowledge and skill, not only at the
761 time of initial certification but throughout an individual’s professional career. See
762 Recertification and Continuing Education.

Feedback comments this page only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

763 **Continuing Education—**

764 Activities, often short courses, that certified professionals engage in to receive credit for
765 the purpose of maintaining continuing competence and renewing certification. See
766 Recertification and Continuing Competence.

767 **Cut Score—**

768 A specific score on an assessment instrument or instruments at or above which passing
769 decisions are made and below which failing decisions are made.

770 **Discipline—**

771 A formal, published process for the enforcement of standards governing the professional
772 behavior (i.e., ethics) of certificants.

773 **Eligibility Requirements—**

774 Published criteria, often benchmarks for education, training, and experience, with which
775 applicants must demonstrate compliance in order to qualify for certification.

776 **Equating—**

777 A statistical process used to convert scores on two or more alternate forms of an
778 assessment instrument to a common score for purposes of comparability and equivalence.

779 **Essential Element—**

780 A statement that is directly related to a Standard and specifies what a certification
781 program must do to fulfill the requirement of the Standard.

782 **Fairness—**

783 The principle that all applicants and candidates will be treated in an equitable manner
784 throughout the entire certification process. See Bias.

Feedback comments this page only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

785 **Incorporation Status—**

786 Legal recognition granted by states to organizations; determines IRS classification as for-
787 profit or nonprofit.

788 **Item—**

789 A general term referring to problems and/or questions that appear in assessment
790 instruments and to which candidates must respond.

791 **Item Bank—**

792 The system by which test items are maintained, stored, and classified to facilitate item
793 review, item development, and examination assembly.

794 **Item Type or Format—**

795 The structure of a problem or question in an assessment instrument (i.e., multiple choice,
796 open-ended).

797 **Job/Practice Analysis—**

798 Any of several methods used singly or in combination to identify the performance
799 domains and associated tasks, knowledge, and/or skills relating to the purpose of the
800 credential and providing the basis for validation.

801 **Parent Organization—**

802 The legal entity under which a certification program is established when the certification
803 program is governed as part of a larger organization.

804 **Performance Domains—**

805 The set of organized categories characterizing a role or job under which tasks and
806 associated knowledge and/or skills may be represented in the job/practice analysis.

Feedback comments this page only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

807 **Public Member—**

808 A representative of the consumers of services provided by a defined certificant
809 population, serving on the governing body of a certification program.

810 **Publish—**

811 Made public in hardcopy, electronic, or web-based formats and widely accessible.

812 **Recertification—**

813 Requirements and procedures established as part of a certification program that
814 certificants must meet in order to ensure continuing competence and renew their
815 certificate. See Continuing Competence and Continuing Education.

816 **Reliability—**

817 The degree to which the scores on an assessment instrument are free of measurement
818 error.

819 **Self-Assessment—**

820 A process by which an assessment instrument is self-administered for the specific
821 purpose of providing performance feedback rather than a pass/fail decision.

822 **Sponsor—**

823 An agency that offers a certification program and awards credentials (free-standing
824 board, professional association, certification committee, advisory committee, or entity
825 within a business or industry).

826 **Stakeholders—**

827 The various groups with an interest in the quality, governance, and operation of a
828 certification program, such as the public, employers, customers, clients, third party
829 payers, etc.

Feedback comments this page only (specify by line number—please write legibly):

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DONORS TO THE STANDARDS REVISION PROJECT

- 851 ACT
- 852 American Association for Medical Transcription
- 853 American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation
- 854 American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc.
- 855 American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians
- 856 American Nurses Credentialing Center
- 857 American Podiatric Medical Specialties Board
- 858 American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
- 859 Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc.
- 860 Betty Burns, CAE
- 861 Board for Certification in Pedorthics
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- 863 Board of Certified Safety Professionals
- 864 Certification Board for Music Therapists, Inc.
- 865 Certification Board Perioperative Nursing
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- 867 Certified Fund Raising Executive Professional Certification Board
- 868 Certifying Board of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates, Inc.
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- 874 Council on Professional Standards for Kinesiotherapy
- 875 Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.
- 876 Hand Therapy Certification Commission, Inc.
- 877 Healthcare Quality Certification Board
- 878 Human Resources Research Organization
- 879 Institute of Certified Management Accountants, Inc.

- 880 Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
881 Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology
882 Knapp & Associates International, Inc.
883 Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist
884 National Association of Purchasing Management
885 National Association of Forensic Counselors, Inc.
886 National Athletic Trainer's Association Board of Certification, Inc.
887 National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc.
888 National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc.
889 The National Board for Respiratory Care, Inc.
890 National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork
891 National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
892 National Council for Interior Design Qualification
893 National Organization for Competency Assurance
894 National Council on Qualifications for the Lighting Professions
895 National Skill Standards Board
896 National Strength and Conditioning Association Certification Commission
897 Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation
898 Pharmacy Technician Certification Board
899 Professional Examination Service
900 Prometric
901 Scott Sturzl, CPM
902 Water Quality Association

903 **2000 NCCA COMMISSION**

- 904 **Gary Smith** *Chair*
905 (chair term expires 12/2000 - term expires 12/2001)
906 Associate Executive Director - National Board for Respiratory Care
- 907 **Karen Zaglaniczny, PhD, CRNA** *Co-Chair*
908 (co-chair term expires 12/2000 - term expires 12/2002)
909 Assistant Director, Education Program - Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists
910 Department of Anesthetists - William Beaumont Hospital
- 911 **Linda Byrne, CMT** *NOCA Board Appointee*
912 (term expires 12/2000)
913 Senior Director of Certification - American Association for Medical Transcription
- 914 **Chuck Friedman, PhD** *NCCA Appointee*
915 (term expires 12/2000)
916 Assistant Vice President - ACT
- 917 **James Hogan, PhD** *NCCA Appointee*
918 (term expires 12/2000)
919 Research Project Manager
920 Carl Vinson Institute of Government - The University of Georgia
- 921 **Betty Burns, CAE** *Elected Commissioner*
922 (term expires 12/2000)
923 Executive Director - The National Certification Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic,
924 and Neonatal Nursing Specialties
- 925 **Cynthia Durley, MEd** *Elected Commissioner*
926 (term expires 12/2001)
927 Executive Director - Dental Assisting National Board
- 928 **Maralyn Turner, PhD** *Public Member*
929 (term expires 12/2000)
930 Maralyn Turner and Associates
- 931 **Philip O'Neill, Esquire** *General Counsel*
932 Jacobsen, Price, Holman and Stern

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934 (president term expires 12/2000)
935 Executive Director - Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy
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937 (president-elect term expires 12/2000)
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946 (term expires 12/2000)
947 Associate Executive Director - National Board for Respiratory Care
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949 (term expires 12/2000)
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955 (term expires 12/2001)
956 Executive Director - National Council on Qualifications for the Lighting Professions
- 957 Carolyn Lewis, PhD, RN, CNAA *Elected Board Member*
958 (term expires 12/2002)
959 Executive Director - American Nurses Credentialing Commission on Certification
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961 Executive Director - National Organization for Competency Assurance

962 **STEERING COMMITTEE**

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964 Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards
- 965 Susan Caulk, CRNA, MA
966 Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists
- 967 Katherine Church
968 Dietary Managers Association
- 969 Richard T. Cotton, MA
970 American Council on Exercise
- 971 Nadine Davis, MA
972 Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist
- 973 Valarie French
974 Assessment Operations & Teacher Development - National Board for Professional Teaching
975 Standards
- 976 Steven Halsey
977 Halsey, Rains and Associates
- 978 James P. Henderson, PhD *Project Co-chair*
979 Columbia Assessment Services Testing and Learning Enterprises
- 980 James Hogan, PhD
981 Carl Vinson Institute of Government - The University of Georgia
- 982 Michael Martin
983 Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy
- 984 Dede Pahl
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987 Division of Quality Assurance, Bureau of Health Professions - US Department of Health and
988 Human Services
- 989 Gary Smith
990 National Board for Respiratory Care
- 991 I. Leon Smith, PhD *Project Co-chair*
992 Professional Examination Service
- 993 Roy Swift, PhD, OTR, FAOTA
994 Swift Consulting

- 995 Jan Towers, PhD, NPC, CRNP
996 American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
- 997 Ted Twardowski
998 Safety and Occupational Health, OSHA - US Department of Labor
- 999 Richard Young, REM, PE
1000 National Registry of Environmental Professionals
- 1001 Larue D. Coats, PhD *Project Manager*
1002 Coats Knudsen & Associates



1003 **Task Force on Purpose, Governance, Resources**

- 1004 Nadine Davis, MA *Chair*
1005 Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist
- 1006 Maria Potenza, PhD
1007 Psychometrics and Test Technology, Certification and Skills Assessment - The Microsoft Corporation
- 1008 Michael Martin
1009 Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy
- 1010 Susan Caulk, CRNA, MA
1011 Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists
- 1012 Jan Towers, PhD, NPC, CRNP
1013 American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
- 1014 Katherine Church
1015 Dietary Managers Association
- 1016 Linda Althouse, PhD
1017 The Education Division - SAS Institute
- 1018 Kathleen Guerra
1019 The Education Division - SAS Institute
- 1020 Denise M. Fandel, MS, ATC
1021 National Athletic Trainers Association Board of Certification

1022 **Task Force on Responsibilities to Stakeholders**

- 1023 Valarie French *Chair*
1024 Assessment Operations and Teacher Development - National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- 1025 Ted Twardowski
1026 Safety and Occupational Health, OSHA - US Department of Labor
- 1027 Dennis Whitney, CMA, CFM
1028 Institute of Certified Management Accountants
- 1029 Gary Smith
1030 National Board for Respiratory Care
- 1031 Richard Cotton, MA
1032 American Council on Exercise

1033 **Task Force on Assessment Instruments**

1034 Roy Swift, PhD. OTR, FAOTA *Chair*
1035 Swift Consulting

1036 Stephen Koffler, EdD
1037 The Chauncey Group International

1038 Rose Mary Ammons, EdD
1039 Professional Development Technologies Incorporated

1040 Steven Halsey
1041 Halsey, Rains, and Associates

1042 I. Leon Smith, PhD
1043 Professional Examination Service

1044 William G. Harris, PhD
1045 Association of Test Publishers

1046 William C. Anderson, PE, DEE
1047 Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards

1048 John Ford, PhD
1049 Personnel Resources and Development Center - US Office of Personnel Management

1050 **Task Force on Recertification**

1051 Steve Permison, MD *Chair*
1052 Division of Quality Assurance – Bureau of Health Professions - US Department of Health and Human
1053 Services

1054 Dede Pahl
1055 Certified Financial Planners Board of Standards, Inc.

1056 James Hogan, PhD
1057 Carl Vinson Institute of Government - The University of Georgia

1058 Richard Young, REM, PE
1059 National Registry of Environmental Professionals

1060 Karen Zaglaniczny, PhD, CRNA
1061 Department of Anesthetists - William Beaumont Hospital

1062 **END OF DOCUMENT. PLEASE ADD ANY COMMENTS AND RETURN TO PROJECT MANAGER LARUE COATS**