Application and Interview Process for Initial Certification with the NACC

Topics Covered in this Workshop

1. Prerequisites of the Certification Process
2. Timeline leading up to the Deadline
3. Timeline following the Deadline
4. The interview, Certification Commission vote, and Appeals processes
5. Detailed breakdown of the binder that is submitted for certification

Prerequisites

- There are several prerequisites to beginning the certification process:
  - Membership
  - Roman Catholic/Member of a church in union with Rome
  - Undergraduate and graduate education
  - Four completed units of Clinical Pastoral Education

Membership

- You must be a full member of the NACC in order to receive the certification application
- Current (2013) membership dues are $280 annually
- Membership applications are available on the NACC website
- You may request the certification application as number 18D on the membership application
- If you currently are a member at a different level (Student, Associate, etc.), you must upgrade to full membership before you may request the application

Benefits of Membership

- Voting privileges
- Opportunity to serve on NACC Board of Directors, Committees, Commissions, and Panels
- Advocacy
- Member communications, including NACC Now and electronic Vision
- Educational and networking opportunities, including audio-conferences, special networking calls, local and regional events
- NACC task force involvement
- Receive member rates for conferences
- Volunteer opportunities
- State Liaison connectivity
- Website resources
- Annual National Conferences

Membership

- If you are certified, you must remain a full member of the NACC.
- Annual dues must be paid in full and on time.
Roman Catholic Affiliation

- You must be Roman Catholic or a member of a church in union with Rome in order to apply for certification.

  Note: If you are going through the RCIA process, you may apply for certification for the February 15th deadline. The National Office requires a letter from your pastor following Easter that states that you have completed the process.

Education Requirements

- You must have completed an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution (any subject area).
- You must also complete a graduate-level degree in a theological area from an accredited institution.
- The NACC defines a graduate-level theological degree as a graduate degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or spirituality.
- For degrees in other related disciplines, please consult Dr. Susanne Chawszczewski in the National Office.

Educational Requirements, Continued

- The NACC does not require a certain number of credit hours for the graduate-level degree.
- An equivalency for the undergraduate or graduate-level degree is not granted.
- Note: Colleges/universities do not have to be Catholic in order for the NACC to accept degrees from them.

CPE

- The NACC requires 4 completed units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from an accredited CPE program.
- NACC accepts units from ACPE Accredited CPE Programs, CASC/ASCC Accredited Education Centers, and USCCB Accredited CPE Programs
- Units may be taken at any level and taken in any sequence

When/How to Get a Mentor

- Once you begin assembling your materials for certification, the NACC Certification Commission highly recommends you seek an Active Board Certified Chaplain (CH) or CPE Supervisor (SU) for mentoring during the preparation of your materials.
- For help finding a Mentor, Members may go to the “Online Membership Directory” located on the NACC website to find a (CH) or (SU) in their area.

Timeline Leading up to the Application Deadline

- The applicant must first apply for and become a full member of the NACC (anytime before the deadline).
- The applicant contacts NACC office for certification materials (Note: this request may be checked on the membership application).
- NACC office responds within 14 days.
- Applicant should begin compiling/requesting supportive documents such as letters of recommendation, transcripts, etc.
- Applicant submits supportive materials and fee by postmark deadline of February 15 for a Fall interview, and by September 15 for a Spring interview.
Postmark Deadline

- If the 15th is a Sunday or holiday, the next business day is acceptable for the postmark.
- All materials (letters, transcripts, etc.) must be postmarked by the deadline.
- No extensions on the deadline are given.
- Materials that are submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. Participation in the interview process will be delayed until the next available application deadline.

Tips for applicants whose last CPE unit will end in the month of August

- You may work on your certification materials over the final summer of CPE so that most of the materials are ready to be submitted by September 15th.
- The National Office allows a late turn-in ONLY of final unit evaluations (self/supervisor) to accommodate August CPE students.
- All other materials must be submitted by the postmark deadline.
- If you would like to take the option of late CPE evaluation submission, please contact the National Office to inform us of your circumstance prior to sending in an incomplete set of application materials.

Timeline Following the Deadline

- Immediately after the deadline, your materials are initially processed (internal database updated, payment of the fee is processed, etc.)
- Within a few weeks of the deadline, NACC Certification Commissioners conduct a Materials Review.

Materials Review

- The Certification Commissioners review the materials and determine if each applicant is eligible for an interview.
- You will receive notification from the NACC if:
  - Your materials are complete and you are eligible for an interview – OR -
  - Your materials require editing/an additional item to be submitted – OR -
  - Your materials are incomplete/insufficient for an interview.

Interview Set-Up

- If you have been scheduled for an interview, the NACC will arrange a 3-member interview team and will set up a date/time/location for the interview.
- The National Office will contact you once this information is available (approx. in February for a spring interview, approx. in July for a fall interview).

Materials to Interview Team

- A binder of materials (Tab 1-8) is to be sent to each of the interview team members no later than 45 days prior to the interview.
- This is the responsibility of the applicant.
- Unless you are asked to correct a document following the binder review, the materials sent to the interview team must be exactly the same as originally submitted to the NACC.
- No additional materials may be sent.
Interview Prep Call

- Starting in 2013, the NACC is offering a conference call for all current applicants who have been accepted for an interview.
- We plan to continue offering this call twice per year as an important resource for current applicants accepted for an interview.
- If you apply for certification and are accepted for an interview, please watch for communications from the National Office regarding this new opportunity.

Interview

- The interview is 50 minutes long.
- The team will have reviewed your materials and noted areas that require additional clarification.
- The Presenter's Report Part I will note the Standards that require clarification. 4-5 questions will be raised that will form the basis of the interview.
- You will have one hour before your interview to review the PRP I and prepare for the interview.
- You are expected to initiate conversation/discussion of those Standards that require clarification.

Interview, Continued

- After the interview, you will be instructed to leave the room while your team members deliberate and compose your Presenter's Report, Part II.
- This process takes approximately ninety minutes.
- Then you will be called back into the interview to receive feedback from your team and oral notification of the team's recommendation to the Certification Commission.

Certification Commission Vote

- At its next available meeting, the NACC Certification Commission will vote on all pending certification decisions.
- All split-vote (i.e. 2-1) and recommendations to not certify will be individually reviewed by the Commission. In the review, the PRP I and II are considered.
- The applicant will be notified of the Commission's decision in writing within 30 days of the Commission meeting (provided that the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received).

Appeals Process

- The appeals process is intended for applicants who believe and can demonstrate that NACC Standards (#302-305) and/or Procedures were violated during the interview process. The Appeals Panel only addresses the issue of a violation of Standards (#302-305)/Procedures. No other grounds will be considered.

Appeals, Continued

- If you choose to appeal the decision of the Certification Commission, you must write a letter of appeal.
- The purpose of the letter is only to demonstrate which Standards/Procedures were violated and specific and complete details of the violation(s).
- You must reference specific Standards/Procedures (by number and in detail) in your letter of appeal.
- You have twenty (20) days from the postmark of the Appeal Packet to send a formal appeal to the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel in care of the NACC National Office via certified mail.
Materials Submitted to the National Office for Certification

- Basic set-up:
  - One 1½ inch binder (no smaller/larger binders meet the requirements)
  - One set of numeric tabs (labeled 1-16 only)
  - Paper dividers/sub-tabs as needed
- For instructions to place supportive materials in the binder, please refer to the “Checklist for Supportive Materials Required for Certification Interview.”
- NACC requires a professional application binder of materials, complete with accurate table of contents, numerical tabs in the correct order, and all required materials by the time of the application deadline.

Tab 1: Application

- One copy of the completed NACC Certification Application
- Applicant provides the following critical information on the form:
  - Applicant’s membership number which identifies applicant as a Member.
  - CPE centers where all units were taken.
  - NACC-obtained CPE equivalency and documentation of previous certification interviews if applicable.
- Please contact the National Office for the application form once you are a full member.

Tab 2: Autobiography

- Addresses personal, professional, and faith development
- Not to exceed seven (7) pages
- Format: single spaced, 12 point type, one-inch margins, numbered pages.

Tab 3: Verbatim

- One verbatim with numbered pages.
- Verbatim should be current. Current is defined as within one year of application for certification.
- If you do not have a current verbatim, generate a verbatim from your current ministerial or volunteer experience.
Tab 4: CPE Self-Evaluations
- Final evaluations by the Applicant of the four most recently completed CPE units.
- Each evaluation is to be clearly dated and separated by a sub-tab or a colored page.
- If you completed more than four units of CPE, only the four most recent units should be submitted.

Tab 5: CPE Supervisor Evaluations
- Final evaluations by the CPE supervisor of the four most recently completed CPE units.
- Each evaluation is to be clearly dated, signed, and separated by a sub-tab or a colored page.
- Note: Both the applicant and the supervisor must sign all supervisor evaluations.

Missing/Destroyed Records
What do I do if my CPE evaluations were lost or destroyed?
- Please inform the NACC.
- You will be advised to contact the CPE center as records must be held by the center for at least ten years.
- If the center does not have copies, the NACC requires a letter from the center explaining this circumstance.
- You must recreate the documents to the best of your ability.

Narrative Statement
- Not to exceed ten (10) pages
- Documents how the Applicant meets each of the competencies required for certification citing each Standard 302-305 (including all subheadings)
- Format: single spaced, 12 point type, and one-inch margins—including the number and wording for each standard

Narrative Statement, Continued
- Standards must be addressed in numerical order.
- Include a heading which lists the Standard number and description.
- Example:
  - Standard 303.1 Function pastorally in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries of others
  - I meet this Standard in the following ways...

Narrative Statement Tips
- Start early - Don't think this is something that can be written in a day or two.
- Take time to become familiar with the Standards. As you are reading through them, make notes about a patient or a situation that seems to connect to the Standard.
- Then, at a later time try to capture in words how your interaction/intervention/involvement speaks to your knowledge, skill, and competence.
Narrative Tips, continued

- Vignettes (brief stories) are one way to convey to the interview team that you are competent.
- Do not define what the Standard means. This is your opportunity to demonstrate competence. This is your opportunity to present why you are a competent chaplain, why a patient would want you at the bedside, why an employer would want to hire you, why co-workers would consider you to be a “professional.”

Narrative Tips, Continued

- Brevity in composition is an art and can be extremely difficult - that's another reason to start on this portion of your materials very early in the process.
- Each Standard must be addressed individually and in numerical order.

Narrative Tips, Continued

- You may find yourself thinking that a story you shared for a Standard you addressed earlier in the narrative could also be used for another Standard and this is quite possible/probable.
- So use the same vignette but, remember to indicate how it speaks to your competence relative to the current Standard.
- Do not think about cross-referencing Standards (i.e. See Standard 410.5) rather than writing to the Standard.

Tab 7: Equivalency for CPE

- If applicable, insert the letter from the Certification Commission granting equivalency for one unit of CPE.
- If not applicable, include TAB 7 as an empty tab.
- Note: If you need to apply for an equivalency for CPE, the process must be finalized before you can apply for certification with the NACC.
- Please review the equivalency section of the NACC website and contact Lindsey Tews with questions about the equivalency process.

Tab 8: Presenter’s Reports

- If applicable, for those reapplying for certification, submit Presenter’s Reports Part I and II from any past NACC certification interview(s).
- If not applicable, include TAB 8 as an empty tab.

Tab 9: Certification Application Fee

- Certification Application Fee ($400.00 in U.S. Currency)
- Two-thirds of the fee is non-refundable if the process is discontinued for any reason.
- If paying by check, please clip check to the tab (or place in envelope in tab, etc.)
- Payment by credit card is available. Please call the National Office for this option.
Tab 10: Letter of recommendation (employer)
- Letter of recommendation from the person to whom the Applicant reports in one’s place of employment.
- If the Applicant is unemployed, a letter from anyone in a reporting position that can attest to the workplace experience of the Applicant is required.
- Letter is to be a signed original on letterhead sent directly to the NACC National Office (tab to be included in binder for NACC National Office, but kept empty).
- Letter must be current (valid for one year from the date of origin)

Tab 11: Letter of Recommendation (Pastor)
- For lay Applicants, a letter of recommendation from one’s pastor or from a priest in active ministry is submitted.
- Letter is to be a signed original on letterhead sent directly to the NACC National Office (tab to be included in binder for NACC National Office, but kept empty).
- Letter must be current (valid for one year from the date of origin)

Tab 12: Verification of CPE Units
- For units taken at an ACPE center: A Transcript Verification Form is required for all units taken at an ACPE center.
- For units taken at a USCCB accredited center or a CASC center: A letter indicating that units were taken at a USCCB accredited center or a CASC center is required.
- It is the responsibility of the Applicant to check with the NACC National Office to make sure the necessary transcripts have arrived (tab to be included in binder for the NACC National Office even if it is empty).

Tab 13: Undergraduate Transcript
- An official transcript of the basic academic degree (B.A. or B.S. Degree). Transcripts are to be sent directly from the institution(s) to the NACC.
- The Certification Commission requires transcript analysis at the Applicant’s expense for all degrees acquired outside the United States.
- It is the responsibility of the Applicant to check with the NACC National Office to make sure the necessary transcripts have arrived (tab to be included in binder for the NACC National Office, but kept empty).

Tab 14: Graduate Transcript
- An official transcript of the graduate level theological degree (theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or spirituality).
- Transcripts are to be sent directly from the institution(s) to the NACC.
- The Certification Commission requires transcript analysis at the Applicant’s expense for all degrees acquired outside the United States.
- It is the responsibility of the Applicant to check with the NACC National Office to make sure the necessary transcripts have arrived (tab to be included in binder for the NACC National Office, but kept empty).

Transcripts, Continued
- All transcripts and analyses are due by the certification postmark deadline of February 15 or September 15 so please plan ahead.
- A list of agencies that analyze degrees from outside the United States can be found under the “FAQs” in the “Certification” section of the NACC website.
Tab 15: Ethics Accountability Statement

- No disciplinary or corrective action arising from a complaint of unethical and/or criminal conduct imposed on and no complaint for unethical and/or criminal conduct is pending in a civil, criminal, ecclesiastical, employment, or other professional organization’s forum
- Never resigned, been transferred or terminated, nor negotiated a settlement from a position for reasons related to unethical and/or criminal conduct.
- If you cannot sign the statement, you must follow the Ethics Accountability Statement Procedures (EP11-EP14)

Tab 16: Ecclesiastical Endorsement

- The NACC National Office requires and requests a current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement.
- Current is defined as within one year of application for certification.
- The NACC National Office will request a current letter of endorsement. Do not initiate the endorsement request on your own.
- This is formal approval for ministry by:
  a. The Bishop of the diocese of the Applicant's ministry or;
  b. The major superior if the Applicant is a member of a religious order or;
  c. The Ordinary (understood as the Bishop of the diocese where the priest or deacon is incardinated) if the Applicant is a diocesan priest or deacon. (CP 123)

Ecclesiastical Endorsement, Continued

- If you are a layperson, your letter of recommendation from your priest will be used to help the NACC request the letter of ecclesiastical endorsement.
- While you are not required to do so, scheduling an interview or phone call or writing a letter to the bishop will help you to build a relationship with your diocese of ministry.
- Please include this tab in binder for the NACC National Office, but leave it empty.
- Note: Lay men and women ministering in the Archdiocese of New York, please contact the National Office for further instructions.

Returning Applicants

- If you previously interviewed and were not certified, you must follow these guidelines:
  a. All materials from the most current Checklist must be submitted as part of your new certification application (please contact the National Office to confirm if any materials from previous interviews are still on file).
  b. Presenter’s Reports Part I and II from past certification interview(s) must be submitted.
  c. Recommendations from the previous NACC certification interview(s) from Presenter’s Report Part II are to be included and addressed in the Narrative Statement as a one-page addition.
  d. Payment of the current certification application fee is required.
  e. If changes have been made to the process, your new application must be in compliance with the revised Certification Procedures.
  f. Applicants can re-enter the Certification Application process after receiving their official certification denial letter from the Certification Commission.

Contact Person

- If you have any questions or concerns regarding the certification process, please contact Lindsey Tews Administrative Specialist/Certification, at the NACC National Office at (414) 483-4898 ext. 308 or at Lindsey.Tews@nacc.org.