



## **Certification Procedures Manual**

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)  
Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (SCEMS)**



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NACC Certification Commission**

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## Certification Procedures Manual

### Part One – Chaplain Certification Procedures

CP11 NACC Chaplains are Catholics who manifest proficiency in Catholic theology and spiritual care praxis, and develop competence in the areas of Theory and Practice, Professional Identity and Conduct, Professional Practice Skills and Organizational Leadership. Certification is determined through written materials (see below, CP131.3) and an interview (in-person or virtual) in which an Interview Team assesses the Applicant's Competencies for certification. At the completion of the interview, the Interview Team recommends or does not recommend the Applicant to the Certification Commission for certification. It is the decision of the Certification Commission to certify or not to certify. The NACC encourages Applicants for certification to engage in a mentoring relationship with a NACC Certified Chaplain or NACC Certified Educator upon entering the certification process.

CP12 Prerequisites

121 Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC (Qualification 301.QUA2).

122 Satisfactory completion of four (4) units (Level I or Level II) of CPE from an accredited ACPE, USCCB/CCA, or CASC/ACSS CPE center (Qualification 301.QUA4).

122.1 If applicable, an Applicant granted one (1) unit of equivalency for CPE must include a copy of the letter from the NACC Certification Commission granting equivalency.

123 If the Applicant is a lay person, the Applicant requests that a current letter of recommendation from his/her pastor or from a priest in active ministry (in the Applicant's Diocese of Ministry) be submitted by the pastor/priest directly to the NACC National Office (Qualification 301.QUA1). Letter is to be a signed original on letterhead. Current is defined as within one year of application for certification. This letter accompanies the request for ecclesiastical endorsement as a lay ecclesial health care minister requested by the NACC National Office.

124 The NACC National Office requests a current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement (Qualification 301.QUA1). Current is defined as within one year of application for certification. The NACC will complete the endorsement request on the Applicant's behalf. Ecclesiastical endorsement is formal approval for ministry by:

124.1 The Bishop of the diocese of the Applicant's ministry if the Applicant is a lay person, or

124.2 The major superior if the Applicant is a member of a religious order, or

124.3 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.

Ecclesiastical endorsement also assures NACC that any Safe Environment Training requirements (of the endorsing body) have been met by the Applicant.

- 125 Completion of a Bachelor's degree from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation ([www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)). (Qualification 301.QUA3).
- 126 Completion of a graduate-level theological degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or spirituality from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation ([www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)). (Qualification 301.QUA3).

**\*Graduate-level theological degree**

The NACC defines a graduate-level theological degree as a graduate degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or spirituality. Included among the acceptable degrees is the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) degree plus one further year of theological studies of the Pontifical Universities and their affiliated institutions.

- 126.1 If applicable, an Applicant granted Graduate Degree Equivalency must include a copy of the letter from the NACC Certification Commission granting equivalency.
- 127 Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- 128 Current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1). Current is defined as within one year of application for certification.

CP13 Procedures

131 Application Process

- 131.1 The Applicant contacts the NACC National Office for links to certification materials on the NACC website.
- 131.2 The NACC National Office responds electronically within fourteen (14) days with links to the following materials (the Application form will be attached to the electronic correspondence):
- 131.2a Application for certification (available as an email attachment only upon becoming a full member of the NACC).
  - 131.2b Checklist for Supportive Materials required for Certification Interview.
  - 131.2c Certification Procedures Manual - Part One (1).
  - 131.2d Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals.
  - 131.2e Ethics and Accountability Statement for signature.
  - 131.2f E-Learning Module and Post-Test Instructions.
  - 131.2g Guidelines and Templates for:
    - 131.2g1 Narrative Statement I - NACC-Specific Competencies.
    - 131.2g2 Narrative Statement II - Common Competencies.
    - 131.2g3 Integrative Theological Essay.

- 131.2g4 Spiritual Care Encounter.
- 131.2h Narrative Writing Guides for:
  - 131.2h1 Narrative Statement I – NACC-Specific Competencies.
  - 131.2h2 Narrative Statement II – Common Competencies.
- 131.3 Applicant submits a Certification Portfolio to the NACC National Office by the applicable deadline and retains a copy of all materials submitted, including the application form. Certification Portfolio may be submitted either as a binder (paper copy) through mail/package service or by digital upload (electronic copy) through the NACC Certification Portal. Digital upload method is preferred. Certification Portfolio submitted as binder (paper copy) must be postmarked by the applicable deadline. Certification Portfolio submitted as digital upload (electronic copy) must be uploaded by the applicable deadline. All materials in Certification Portfolio must be formatted in single-spaced, 12 point type (Arial, Garamond, or Times New Roman), with one inch margins [Note: CPE Evaluations may be submitted as originally formatted]. Applicants opting to submit the Certification Portfolio in the Binder format should utilize a three-ring 1 ½ inch binder with tabs.
  - 131.3a Completed application form.
  - 131.3b Autobiography, not to exceed seven (7) numbered pages, addressing personal, professional, and faith development.
  - 131.3c One current example of the Applicant’s provision of Spiritual Care utilizing the Spiritual Care Encounter Cover Sheet with numbered pages (minimum of five (5) pages, maximum of ten (10) pages). Current is defined as within one year of application for certification. The Spiritual Care Encounter should include the Cover Sheet and follow the instructions as set forth in the Cover Sheet. It will address, at minimum, the following Competencies ITP2, PPS10 and PPS11.
  - 131.3d Final evaluations by Applicant of the final CPE Unit and one other CPE Unit of the Applicant’s choice which demonstrate the Applicant’s ability and willingness to grow as a professional chaplain. Each evaluation is to be clearly dated and separated by a tab or a colored page.
  - 131.3e Final evaluations by the Certified Educator of the final CPE Unit and the corresponding CPE Unit evaluation of the Applicant’s choice as referenced in CP131.3d. Each evaluation is to be clearly dated, signed, and separated by a tab or a colored page.
  - 131.3f Narrative Statement I, not to exceed four (4) pages, documenting how the Applicant meets each of the NACC-Specific Competencies required for certification (excluding ITP1.1 which will be assessed through the Integrative Theological Narrative [see CP131.3h] and ITP4.1 which will be assessed through an E-Learning module [see CP131.3n]).
    - 131.3f1 Applicant must utilize the Narrative Statement I Template and retain the headings which list each Competency’s alphanumeric label and description.

- 131.3f2 If this is not the Applicant's first interview for certification, an additional page must be included addressing how the Applicant has grown in the Competencies that were not met as outlined in the Presenter's Report Part II from each previous interview.
- 131.3g Narrative Statement II, not to exceed ten (10) pages, documenting how the Applicant meets each of the Common Competencies required for certification (excluding PIC8 & PIC9 which will be assessed through materials and within the interview).
- 131.3g1 Applicant must utilize the Narrative Statement II Template and retain the headings which list each Competency's alphanumeric label and description.
- 131.3g2 If this is not the Applicant's first interview for certification, an additional page must be included addressing how the Applicant has grown in the Competencies that were not met as outlined in the Presenter's Report Part II from each previous interview.
- 131.3h Integrative Theological Essay (Competency ITP1.1), not to exceed three (3) pages in length, addressing the Applicant's familiarity with the documents and theologies of the Competency, including ministerial examples demonstrating how the theologies have enhanced the Applicant's provision of spiritual care.
- 131.3i If applicable, letter from the NACC Certification Commission granting equivalency of one (1) CPE Unit.
- 131.3j If applicable, Presenter's Reports Part I and II from each previous interview.
- 131.3k The certification application fee, two-thirds of which is non-refundable if the process is discontinued for any reason.
- 131.3l Current letter of recommendation from the person to whom the Applicant reports in his/her place of ministry. If the Applicant is not currently ministering, a letter from anyone in a reporting position that can attest to the ministerial experience of the Applicant is required. Letter is to be submitted directly to the NACC National Office by the person making the recommendation. Letter is to be a signed original on letterhead. Current is defined as within one year of application for certification.
- 131.3m If the Applicant is a lay person, the Applicant requests that a current letter of recommendation from his/her pastor or from a priest in active ministry (in the applicant's Diocese of Ministry) be submitted by the pastor/priest directly to the NACC National Office. Letter is to be a signed original on letterhead. Current is defined as within one year of application for certification. This letter accompanies the request for ecclesiastical endorsement that will be initiated by the NACC National Office.
- 131.3n Certificate of completion of E-Learning module and Post-Test on NACC-Specific Competency ITP4.1.

- 131.3o An official transcript of the Bachelor’s degree. Transcripts are requested by the Applicant to be delivered directly from the institution to the NACC National Office. The Certification Commission requires transcript analysis, at the Applicant’s expense, for all degrees acquired outside the United States.
  - 131.3p An official transcript of the graduate-level theological degree. Transcripts are requested by the Applicant to be delivered directly from the institution to the NACC National Office. The Certification Commission requires transcript analysis, at the Applicant’s expense, for all degrees acquired outside the United States. If applicable, a letter from the NACC Certification Commission granting a Graduate Degree Equivalency is submitted.
  - 131.3q Current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1). Current is defined as within one year of application for certification.
- 131.4 Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC National Office starts a file for the Applicant. The NACC office reviews the Applicant’s materials to assess the completion of Certification Procedures 131.3a through 131.3q. If any materials are missing, an interview will not be scheduled. If the interview is not scheduled:
- 131.4a The Applicant will have the opportunity to reapply for certification.
  - 131.4b One-third of the certification application fee will be refunded.
  - 131.4c All documents will be destroyed except those documents cited below in CP133.5.
- 131.5 If an interview is scheduled, the NACC National Office initiates the request for endorsement on behalf of the Applicant (Qualification 301.QUA1).
- 131.6 The NACC National Office sends the Applicant:
- 131.6a The names and addresses of the interview team, identified by role within the interview team: Chair, Presenter, Reader.
  - 131.6b The date, time and location of the interview.
- 131.7 The Applicant reviews interview team names for potential conflict of interest and alerts the NACC National Office if any conflict exists.
- 131.8 The NACC National Office will give the interview team access to the relevant Applicant electronic materials via a secured web portal within forty-five (45) days of the initial interview.

## 132 Interview Process

- 132.1 The certification interview is an interview (in-person or virtual) grounded in the NACC Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals, in which the Applicant meets with an interview team, composed of a Chair, Presenter, and Reader, to determine if the Applicant meets the Competencies for Certification of Chaplains.
- 132.2 The interview team meets to collaboratively draft the Presenter's Report Part I. An Interview Team Educator reviews the Presenter's Reports Part I for the education of the interview team members and to facilitate the work of the interview team on behalf of the certification Applicant.
- 132.3 The Presenter prepares the Presenter's Report Part I and the Administrative Specialist/Certification makes available electronically by email the Presenter's Report Part I to the Applicant twenty-four (24) hours prior to the time of the interview. Applicant must verify receipt of Presenter's Report Part I by email or phone call within 1 hour to the Administrative/Specialist Certification.
- 132.4 The interview is fifty (50) minutes in length.
- 132.5 Following the interview, the team deliberates and votes either to recommend or not to recommend the Applicant to the Certification Commission for certification. The interview team considers all written materials as well as the content and the dynamics of the interview in determining its recommendation for certification. An Interview Team Educator reviews the Presenter's Report Part II for the education of the interview team members and to facilitate the work of the interview team on behalf of the certification Applicant.
- 132.6 Following the deliberation process, the Applicant is provided an oral summary of the team's recommendation.
- 132.7 A written report, the Presenter's Report Part II, of this process, and the Presenter's Report Part I, are forwarded to the Certification Commission for action. In the event of a split vote (i.e. 2-1 or 1-2), the interview team must clearly define the rationale of the split vote and both points of view (recommendations for and against certification) must be fully explained in the Presenter's Report Part II.

## 133 Certification Commission Action

- 133.1 The Certification Commission reviews Presenter's Reports, Part I and II, and the recommendation of the interview team and determines whether the Applicant meets the Competencies for Certification of Chaplains.
- 133.2 The Presenter's Report Part II and the Certification Commission's decision to grant or to deny certification, or to offer the Applicant a new interview, is communicated to the Applicant within thirty (30) days of the Certification Commission's action.

- 133.2a When certification is granted and the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Applicant receives a notification packet. The certificate is presented at the Missioning Ceremony of those newly certified during the Eucharistic Celebration at the next annual conference. If the Applicant is unable to attend the ceremony, or upon request, the certificate is mailed.
  - 133.2b When certification is denied, the Applicant has a right to appeal the decision (Competency 307.ACD) or reapply for certification. Information about the appeals process is included with the notification of denial of certification. The NACC National Office maintains a copy of the Applicant's materials until the time of appeal has lapsed. If the Applicant decides to apply again, all Competencies may be considered in subsequent interview(s) including but not limited to Competencies cited as not being met in previous interview(s).
  - 133.2c When an Applicant is offered a new interview by the Certification Commission, all materials are submitted according to established dates and guidelines. Normal and reasonable interview expenses incurred by the Applicant are paid by the NACC. The Applicant has the subsequent two application deadlines to submit new materials and engage in a new interview process at the expense of NACC. If the Applicant does not submit new materials and engage in a new interview process in that time frame, the right to a new interview at NACC's expense is relinquished.
- 133.3 When an Applicant is granted certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the NACC's long-term certification files:
- 133.3a The Certification Application.
  - 133.3b The Ecclesiastical Endorsement letter.
  - 133.3c A copy of the NACC letter requesting ecclesiastical endorsement.
  - 133.3d A copy of the certificate.
  - 133.3e Presenter's Reports Part I and II.
  - 133.3f A copy of the NACC letter confirming certification.
  - 133.3g The Receipt of Certification Materials Form.
  - 133.3h Certification Waivers (if applicable).
  - 133.3i The Chaplain Notification Form.
  - 133.3j Copies of the notification letters.
  - 133.3k The completed NACC Ethics Accountability Statement.
- All other written and electronic documents are destroyed.
- 133.4 When an Applicant is denied certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the NACC's electronic certification file:
- 133.4a The Certification Application.
  - 133.4b Presenter's Reports Part I and II.
  - 133.4c A copy of the NACC letter denying certification.



133.4d The Receipt of Certification Materials Form.

133.4e Certification Waivers (if applicable).

133.5 When an Applicant is denied an interview or denied certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in its temporary files for the period of time indicated by each item:

133.5a Official transcript of the basic academic degree (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).

133.5b Official transcript of the graduate-level theological degree or letter granting Graduate Degree Equivalency (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).

133.5c Transcript analysis, if applicable, of academic and theological degree (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).

133.5d Current letter of recommendation from the person to whom the Applicant reports in his/her place of ministry or if not currently ministering, a letter from anyone in a reporting position that can attest to the ministerial experience of the Applicant (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).

133.5e For lay Applicants, a current letter of recommendation from his/her pastor or from a priest in active ministry (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).

133.5f Current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).

133.5g A copy of the NACC letter requesting ecclesiastical endorsement. (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).

All other written and electronic documents are destroyed.