



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 Two – Certified Associate Chaplain Certification Procedures

- CP21 NACC Certified Associate Chaplains (CAC) are Catholics who have formal education in Catholic theology and spiritual care praxis and develop competence in all NACC-Specific competencies and select Common Competencies in the areas of Professional Identity and Conduct and Professional Practice Skills. Certification is determined through written materials (see below, CP231.3) and a virtual interview in which an Interview Team assesses the Applicant's competencies for certification. At the completion of the interview, the 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 Certified Educator upon entering the certification process.
- CP22 Prerequisites
- 221 Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC (Qualification 701.QUA2).
- 222 Satisfactory completion of a minimum of two (2) units (Level I or Level II) of CPE from an accredited ACPE, USCCB/CCA, or CASC/ACSS CPE center (Qualification 701.QUA4). No equivalencies are granted for the minimum two units of CPE prerequisite for the Certified Associate Chaplain level.
- 223 If the Applicant is a lay person, the Applicant requests 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 701.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 that will be requested by the NACC National Office (see CP224).
- 224 The NACC National Office requests a current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement (Qualification 701.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:
- 224.1 The Bishop of the diocese of the Applicant's ministry if the Applicant is a lay person, or
- 224.2 The major superior if the Applicant is a member of a religious order, or
- 224.3 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.
- 225 Completion of an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution (Qualification 701.QUA3).

- 226 Completion of a minimum of thirty-two (32) graduate-level hours or equivalent of theological study from an accredited institution, pastoral formation program, diocesan ministerial training program, or professional ministry program. Qualification 701.QUA3). Activities accepted for education equivalency are varied and specifics are outlined in the in the Education Equivalency for CAC Instruction Sheet.
- 227 Completion of a minimum of one thousand (1,000) ministry hours post-second unit of accredited CPE. The one thousand (1,000) hours may be employment, volunteer ministry hours, additional accredited CPE unit, or a combination of the three. (Qualification 701.QUA5).
- 228 Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- 229 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.

CP23 Procedures

- 231 Application Process
 - 231.1 The Applicant contacts the NACC National Office for the Education Equivalency materials.
 - 231.2 The NACC National Office responds electronically within fourteen (14) days with links to the following materials:
 - 231.2a Education Equivalency for CAC Instruction Sheet
 - 231.2b Request for Education Equivalency for CAC Form
 - 231.3 Applicant submits the completed Request for Education Equivalency for CAC Form and documentation to the NACC National Office postmarked or digitally submitted no later than nine (9) weeks prior to the Certification application deadline in order to submit application documents for that deadline.
 - 231.4 The submitted form and documentation will be reviewed to ensure Qualification 701.QUA3 has been met, and the Applicant will receive a letter to that effect. The confirmation letter will be included in the Applicant's Certification Portfolio.
 - 231.5 If the equivalency is approved, the NACC National Office sends to the Applicant electronically links to the following materials:
 - 231.5a Application for Certified Associate Chaplain Certification (available as an email attachment only upon becoming a full member of the NACC).
 - 231.5b Checklist for Supportive Materials required for Certified Associate Chaplain Interview.

- 231.5c Certification Procedures Manual - Part Two (2).
- 231.5d Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals.
- 231.5e Ethics and Accountability Statement for signature.
- 231.5f E-Learning Module and Post-Test Guidelines.
- 231.5g Guidelines and Templates for:
 - 231.5g1 Certified Associate Chaplain Narrative Statement – NACC-Specific and Required Common Competencies.
 - 231.5g2 Integrative Theological Essay.
 - 231.5g3 Certified Associate Chaplain Spiritual Care Encounter.
- 231.5h Narrative Writing Guides for:
 - 231.5h1 Certified Associate Chaplain Narrative Statement– NACC-Specific and Required Common Competencies.
- 231.6 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.
 - 231.6a Completed application form.
 - 231.6b Autobiography, not to exceed seven (7) pages, addressing personal, professional, and faith development with numbered pages.
 - 231.6c One current example of the Applicant’s provision of Spiritual Care utilizing the Certified Associate Chaplain 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 Certified Associate Chaplain 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 OL4.1, PPS10 and PPS11.
 - 231.6d Final evaluations by Applicant of two CPE Units. Each evaluation is to be clearly dated and separated by a tab or a colored page.
 - 231.6e Final evaluations by the Certified Educator of two CPE Units. Each evaluation is to be clearly dated, signed, and separated by a tab or a colored page.
 - 231.6f Certified Associate Chaplain Narrative Statement, not to exceed eleven (11) pages, documenting how the Applicant meets all the Common Competencies in the sections Professional Identity and

Conduct (PIC) (excluding PIC 8 and PIC 9 which will be assessed through materials and within the interview); and Professional Practice Skills (PPS), and the eleven NACC-Specific competencies in the sections Integration of Theory and Practice (ITP1.2, ITP1.3), Professional Identity and Conduct (PIC3.1, PIC3.2, PIC3.3, PIC5.1), Professional Practice Skills (PPS2.1, PPS7.1) and Organizational Leadership (OL2.1, OL2.2, OL4.1)

- 231.6f1 Applicant must utilize the Certified Associate Chaplain Narrative Statement Template and retain the headings which list the competencies' alphanumeric label and description.
- 231.6f2 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.
- 231.6g 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 practice of spiritual care.
- 231.6h If applicable, Presenter's Reports Part I and II from each previous interview.
- 231.6i The certification application fee, two-thirds of which is non-refundable if the process is discontinued for any reason.
- 231.6j 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.
- 231.6k If the Applicant is a lay person, the Applicant requests a current letter of recommendation from his/her pastor or from a priest in active ministry within the applicant's Diocese of Ministry, be submitted by the pastor/priest directly to the NACC National Office (Qualification 701.QUAL1). Current is defined as within one year of application for certification. This letter accompanies the request for ecclesiastical endorsement that will be requested by the NACC National Office.
- 231.6l Certificate of completion of E-Learning module and Post-Test on NACC-Specific Competency ITP4.1.
- 231.6m An official transcript of undergraduate 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.

- 231.6n Letter from the NACC Certification Commission confirming that the requirement of thirty-two (32) hours of graduate-level hours of theological study or the equivalency thereof has been met.
 - 231.6o Documentation of one thousand (1,000) ministry hours completed post second unit of accredited CPE. The one thousand (1,000) hours may be employment, volunteer ministry hours, additional accredited CPE unit, or a combination of the three. Applicant documents required ministry hours on Ministry Hours Form.
 - 231.6p 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.
- 231.7 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 231.3a through 231.3p. If any materials are missing, an interview will not be scheduled. If the interview is not scheduled:
- 231.7a The Applicant will have the opportunity to reapply for certification.
 - 231.7b One-third of the certification application fee will be refunded.
 - 231.7c All documents are destroyed except those documents cited below in CP233.5.
- 231.8 If an interview is scheduled, the NACC National Office initiates the request for endorsement on behalf of the Applicant (Qualification 701.QUA1).
- 231.9 The NACC National Office sends the Applicant:
- 231.9a The names and addresses of the interview team, identified by role within the interview team: Chair, Presenter, Reader.
 - 231.9b The date, time and location of the interview.
- 231.10 The Applicant reviews interviewers' names for potential conflict of interest and alerts the NACC National Office if any conflict exists.
- 231.11 The NACC National Office will give the interview team access to the relevant Applicant electronic materials via a secured web portal within 45 days of the initial interview.

232 Interview Process

- 232.1 The certification interview is a virtual interview 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 as a Certified Associate Chaplain.
- 232.2 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.

- 232.3 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 by email or phone call of receipt of PRPI within 1 hour to the Administrative/Specialist Certification.
- 232.4 The interview is fifty (50) minutes in length.
- 232.5 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.
- 232.6 Following the deliberation process, the Applicant is provided an oral summary of the team's recommendation.
- 232.7 A written report, the Presenter's Report Part II of this process, as well as 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.

233 Certification Commission Action

- 233.1 The Certification Commission reviews Presenter's Reports, Parts I and II, and the recommendation of the interview team and determines whether the Applicant meets the Competencies for Certification as a Certified Associate Chaplain.
- 233.2 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.
 - 233.2a 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.
 - 233.2b When certification is denied, the Applicant has a right to appeal the decision (Competency 707.ACD) or to 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).

- 233.2c When an Applicant is offered a new virtual 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.
- 233.3 When an Applicant is granted certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the NACC's long-term certification files:
 - 233.3a The Certification Application.
 - 233.3b The Ecclesiastical Endorsement letter.
 - 233.3c A copy of the NACC letter requesting ecclesiastical endorsement.
 - 233.3d A copy of the certificate.
 - 233.3e Presenter's Reports Part I and II.
 - 233.3f A copy of the NACC letter confirming certification.
 - 233.3g The Receipt of Certification Materials Form.
 - 233.3h Certification Waivers (if applicable).
 - 233.3i The Certified Associate Chaplain Notification Form.
 - 233.3j Copies of the notification letters.
 - 233.3k The completed NACC Ethics Accountability Statement.All other written and electronic documents are destroyed.
- 233.4 When an Applicant is denied certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the NACC's electronic certification file:
 - 233.4a The Certification Application.
 - 233.4b Presenter's Reports Part I and II.
 - 233.4c A copy of the NACC letter denying certification.
 - 233.4d The Receipt of Certification Materials Form.
 - 233.4e Certification Waivers (if applicable).
- 233.5 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:
 - 233.5a Official transcript of the basic academic degree (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).
 - 233.5b Official documentation of a minimum of thirty-two (32) graduate-level theological study hours or letter from the Certification Commission granting a Graduate Education Equivalency for

- graduate-level hours of theological study (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).
- 233.5c Documentation analysis, if applicable, of theological study (NACC to keep for five (5) years from the date of origin).
- 233.5d Current letter(s) verifying ministry hours from the person to whom the Applicant reported in the place of ministry (supervisor). (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).
- 233.5e 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).
- 233.5f 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).
- 233.5g Current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement (NACC to keep for one (1) year from date of origin).
- 233.5h 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.