

# **GENERAL OPERATIONS MANUAL FOR ASTM PERSONNEL CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**



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# GENERAL OPERATIONS MANUAL FOR ASTM PERSONNEL CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

## 1. Preface

1.1 *Purpose*—The purpose of the *General Operations Manual for ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs* is to provide procedures and policies that are common to all ASTM personnel certificate programs. This manual is to be used in conjunction with the profession-specific operations manual issued for each individual certificate program. The profession-specific operations manual contains additional procedures and policies relevant to the subject profession.

1.2 *Authority*—The *General Operations Manual for ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs* is by the authority of the ASTM International charter, bylaws, and the ASTM Board of Directors.

1.3 *Committee on Certification Programs*—The Committee on Certification Programs (CCP), a standing committee of the Society, has the following responsibility as stated in its scope: “CCP develops, maintains, interprets, and enforces the *General Operations Manual for ASTM Certification Programs* and acts upon recommended changes.”

1.4 *Maintenance of General Operations Manual*—This manual is prepared, maintained, and revised by CCP subject to approval of the ASTM Board of Directors.

## 2. ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs

2.1 *Introduction—Certificate Program*—The ASTM Personnel Certificate Program is sponsored and administered by ASTM International. Personnel receiving a certificate through the program have participated in a learning event or series of events designed to educate or train individuals to achieve specified learning outcomes within a defined scope. Said personnel shall have been verified to have successfully completed all program requisites including, but not limited to, an evaluation of learner attainment of intended learner outcomes. In addition to the learning event, certificate programs differ from certification programs in that certificate programs do not have continuing education, surveillance, or recertification aspects. Once issued, a certificate cannot be withdrawn but may be invalidated. Certificates have a specified period of validity. The ASTM Personnel Certificate Program is operated in accordance with ASTM Practice E2659 for Certificate Programs.

2.2 *Benefits of Certificate Programs*—The ASTM personnel certificate programs are beneficial to a multitude of stakeholders:

2.2.1 Provide consumers a basis for evaluating service providers;

2.2.2 Help employers judge the skills of existing or potential employees;

2.2.3 Allow certificate holders to differentiate themselves from others in their profession or advance their careers;

2.2.4 Foster increased recognition of a profession;

2.2.5 May assist regulatory agendas; and

2.2.6 Include listing in the *ASTM Directory of Certificate Holders*.

2.3 *Participation in ASTM Certificate*—Any person meeting the eligibility requirements of any ASTM personnel certificate program may apply for an ASTM certificate.

### **3. References**

E2659 Practice for Certificate Programs

### **4. Initiation of a New Program**

4.1 *Request for a Program*—Requests to create a specific profession certificate program can come from ASTM technical committees or directly from industry, manufacturers, purchasers, consumers, or government. A request form is available on the ASTM website.

4.2 *Determination of Need*—The ASTM Department on Certification Programs, with input from the appropriate ASTM technical committee and key stakeholders, will determine whether there is sufficient interest from industry to initiate a new program. If a need appears to exist, ASTM will seek approval from CCP, establish a technical advisory committee for the specific profession certificate program, and coordinate the development of the new program.

### **5. Committee on Certification Programs (CCP)**

5.1 *Scope*—CCP is a standing committee of the ASTM Board of Directors that is responsible for: the development and interpretation of policies; the approval and dissolution of all certificate programs; and handling appeals of program violations, complaints, and refusals to certify or issue a certificate. CCP develops, maintains, and interprets the general operations manual for ASTM certificate programs and provides final approval for the product/profession-specific operations manuals.

5.2 *Bylaws*—The CCP bylaws contain details on the functions, responsibilities, membership, officers, meetings, and other duties.

### **6. ASTM Staff**

6.1 *Department of Certification Programs*—This department shall have overall administrative and management responsibility for the certificate programs. Administration

and management of the Personnel Certificate Programs will be performed under the supervision of the Director of Certification and perform the following functions:

6.1.1 *Examiners and Third-Party Testing Agencies*—Contracting with and ensuring the competency of subcontracted examiners and third-party testing agencies to administer examinations or proctor computer-based examinations by complying with the applicable provisions of the operations manual including that confidentiality and impartiality will not be compromised. The Certification Department will maintain a list of all examiners and third-party testing agencies and document the assessment and monitoring of their performance.

6.1.2 *Technical Advisory Committees (TACs)*—Establishing and providing administrative support for each specific certificate program including the development and maintenance of a profession-specific operations manual for each program.

6.1.3 *Application Forms*—Develop application forms for all programs including instructions and fee schedules.

6.1.4 *Budgets and Finance*—Development and supervision of the budgets and financial matters of the specific programs. The ASTM Board of Directors approves the certificate program budgets.

6.1.5 *Record Management and Retention*—Maintain a records retention program that insures the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information.

6.1.6 *Policies and Procedures*—Provide supervision of the implementation of all policies and procedures including responsiveness to complaints and ensuring impartiality.

6.1.7 *Issuance of Certificate*—Coordinate the receipt of all certificate information and issues the approval or disapproval to the participant with appropriate information.

6.1.8 *Program Validity*—Periodically (at least every five years), staff shall conduct an analysis to confirm that the assumptions used to develop specific certificate programs remain valid.

6.2 *ASTM Headquarters Staff*—The ASTM Personnel Certificate Program will have resources available from the ASTM staff including the following areas: Technical Committee Operations, Legal, Accounting and Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Publications and Marketing.

## **7. TAC for Profession-Specific Personnel Certificate Programs**

7.1 *Membership*—The TAC will be made up, where possible, of representatives from among the following groups to insure a balance of interests: trade groups, professional associations, manufacturers, suppliers, users, consumers, government agencies, and representatives of the ASTM technical committee. Membership should be reviewed annually for balance of interests and continued interest in participation. A roster of the TAC members will be developed and maintained by the ASM staff.

7.2 *Officers*—A chairman shall be elected by the TAC members to serve for a three-year term and can be re-elected for a second three-year term. A member of the ASTM staff will serve as the Secretary for the TAC providing needed administrative support.

7.3 *Development of a Profession-Specific Operations Manual*—The TAC will have responsibility, along with the ASTM staff, to draft the profession-specific operations manual. The manual will contain detailed information for the program including: program description and rationale, applicant education and experience requirements, core competencies an applicant shall master to be receive a certificate, the type of examination to be used, and training requirements for the program.

7.4 *Development of the Examination*—The TAC, or a subset of the TAC membership, will be responsible for the development of the examination for the certificate program.

7.5 *Meetings*—The TAC will conduct meetings as needed to address program requirements and technical issues that arise during administration of the program. Meetings will be conducted electronically (using web tools) when possible. Meetings will be organized by the ASTM staff.

7.6 *Minutes*—The ASTM staff will prepare, distribute, and store minutes of all meetings.

## **8. Subcontracting and Examinations**

8.1 *Subcontracting with Examiners*—The Certification Department will be responsible for maintaining records on any individuals subcontracted to administer examinations including:

8.1.1 *Agreements*—A properly documented agreement covering the subcontracting arrangement, including confidentiality and prevention of a conflict of interest, shall be developed and executed.

8.1.2 *Competency and Conflicts*—The Certification Department will ensure that examiners subcontracted to administer examinations are competent and comply with applicable provisions of the certificate program and are not involved, either directly or through their employer, with training or the maintenance of the certification of persons in such a way that confidentiality and impartiality could be compromised.

8.1.3 *Subcontractor Records*—The Certification Department will maintain a list of all subcontractors and document the assessment and monitoring of their performance.

8.1.4 *Requirements for Examiners*—Examiners selected to administer examinations shall be familiar with the relevant certificate program, have a thorough knowledge of the relevant examination methods and examination documents, have appropriate competence in the field to be examined, and be free from any interest so that they can make impartial and nondiscriminatory assessments.

8.2 *Subcontracting with Independent Third-Party Testing Agencies*—Certain certificate

programs may dictate the use of independent third-party testing agencies to administer computer-based examinations in lieu of subcontracted examiners. In such cases, the Certification Department shall be responsible for contracting with the third-party testing agencies.

8.3 *Subcontracting with Psychometric Consultants*—Certain certificate programs may dictate the use of independent psychometric consultants to assist in examination development and evaluation of examination items. In such cases, the Certification Department shall be responsible for contracting with such consultants.

## **9. Governing Documents of the ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs**

9.1 *General*—Participants are required to abide by the provisions of all of the governing documents, including any legal and accounting requirements. Failure to do so will result in program violations or termination from the certificate program or both or ineligibility to participate. All documents are stored on secure servers at ASTM Headquarters.

9.2 *Contract with Third-Party Examiner(s) and Testing Agencies*—When appropriate, the contractual agreement between ASTM and third-party examiners and testing agencies defines examination and exam proctoring services as contained in the profession-specific operations manual. It will contain requirements dealing with competence, impartiality, and confidentiality. This document is developed and maintained by the certificate program staff and ASTM legal counsel.

9.3 *General Operations Manual for ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs*—The *General Operations Manual for ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs* outlines the procedures and policies that are common to all ASTM personnel certificate programs. This manual is under the responsibility of the ASTM Committee on Certification Programs. The current version of the manual is available to the public on the ASTM website.

9.4 *Operations Manual for Profession-Specific Programs*—The profession-specific operations manual contains additional procedures and policies that are relevant to the specific profession. Where the *General Operations Manual for ASTM Personnel Certificate Programs* and the *Profession-Specific Operations Manual* differ, the *Profession-Specific Operations Manual* shall prevail. This manual is developed and maintained by the TAC for a specific program. The current manual is available on the ASTM website. Participants will be notified if substantive changes are made to the manual that impact their participation in the program.

9.5 *ASTM Directories of Certificate Holders*—In the directories, names of personnel and their current certificates are contained. The directories are developed and maintained by the certificate program staff. The directories are available to the public on the ASTM website. Participants will have the option to opt out of being listed in a directory.

## **10. Participant Contacts**

10.1 *Contact Information*—It is the responsibility of each personnel certificate program participant to maintain current contacts and notify ASTM immediately of any changes.

## **11. Certificate-Issuing Processes**

11.1 *Certificate Process*—Applicants and participants shall comply with all applicable stages of the certificate-issuing process.

11.1.1 *Information Concerning a Specific Certificate Program*—ASTM will provide on its website the following information for each certificate program: title; certificate program purpose, scope, and intended learning outcomes; description of requisites to earn the certificate; special requirements for participation, if applicable (such as technology, equipment, or skills); qualifications of instructional personnel; fees, deadlines, cancellation, and refund policies; continuing education credit earned; any changes to the certificate program purpose, scope, intended learning outcomes, requisites, and the effective date of the changes; and a statement about what inferences can be appropriately made regarding certificate holders.

11.1.2 *Application*—An application to participate in a certificate program will be available on the ASTM website. All applicants shall complete and return an application committing them to comply with all requirements of the certificate program and supply all information needed for completing the evaluation of the application. Failure to complete the application fully and accurately will void the applicant's participation in any ASTM program.

11.1.3 *Application Evaluation*—The Certification Department will review applications to confirm that the ASTM Personnel Certificate Program has the capability to deliver the requested certificate; is aware of and can, within reason, accommodate any special needs of the applicant such as language or disabilities or both; the applicant has indicated he/she meets the program requisites to earn the certificate; and the applicant has provided all necessary information. ASTM will communicate with the applicant to obtain missing information or clarify any difference of understanding.

11.1.4 *Participation in Program Learning Event*—Each certificate program will have a learning event or series of learning events designed to educate or train individuals to achieve specified learning outcomes. Certificate applicants shall complete all aspects of the learning event or series of learning events. Testing out or otherwise waiving participation in the full or majority of the learning event or events is not permitted.

11.1.5 *Evaluation of Attainment of Intended Learner Outcomes*—Each participant shall undergo an evaluation of their attainment of intended learner outcomes for the certificate program. This evaluation may be written, oral, practical, observational, or a combination of these types. Minimum requirements for achievement of the evaluation of intended learner outcomes will be specified in the program requisites.

11.1.6 *Reporting Procedures*—Results of the evaluation process will be documented and

communicated to the TAC for the recommendation for issuing a certificate.

11.1.7 *Decision on Issuing a Certificate*—The decision to issue a certificate shall be made by the Director of Certification Programs on the recommendation of the TAC. The decision to issue a certificate shall be based solely on the information gathered during the certificate program process.

11.1.8 *Certificate Documentation*—The certificate shall be issued to an individual, nontransferable, and contain the following information:

11.1.8.1 ASTM International with address identified as the certificate issuer and signed by the Director of Certification Programs;

11.1.8.2 Name of the certificate holder;

11.1.8.3 Title and scope of the certificate program;

11.1.8.4 Designation and associated acronym granted, if applicable; and

11.1.8.5 Certificate issue date and term of validity.

11.2 *Records Retention*—The ASTM Records Retention Program available from ASTM will be used. It contains controls needed for identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention time, disposition, and confidentiality.

## **12. Certificate Fees**

12.1 *Explanation of Examination Fee*—The examination fee is submitted along with the training event registration fee and covers costs associated with administering the certificate examination.

12.2 *Schedule of Certificate Fees*—The current schedule of certificate fees for each specific program can be found on the ASTM website.

## **13. Proper Use of the ASTM Certificate and Claims to a Certificate**

13.1 *Guidelines for Use of a Certificate*—The following guidelines shall apply:

13.1.1 Certificate holders are permitted to identify themselves as an ASTM certificate holder.

13.1.2 The certificate may not be revised or altered in any way.

13.1.3 The certificate shall be displayed in the same form as produced by ASTM and cannot be reproduced unless such reproduction is identical to the certificate provided by ASTM.

13.1.4 The certificate is meant to identify a person as opposed to a business entity.

13.1.5 The certificate may not be used in any manner that detracts from the high ideals of ASTM.

13.1.6 Any reference to ASTM in promotional materials shall be complete and accurate.

13.1.7 The certificate may not be used in any manner that would tend to imply a connection between the certificate holder and ASTM that, in fact, may not exist. This includes use of the certificate that the public might construe as an endorsement, approval, or sponsorship by ASTM of a certificate holder or a certificate holder's business or might be taken to support or encourage a certificate holder's sale of products, processes, or installations.

13.1.8 ASTM acts to challenge those who use the certificate without authority from ASTM. Penalties, in addition to legal remedies available, may include being barred from pursuing certificates and publishing the names of violators.

13.2 *Obtaining Certificates*—The personnel certificate will be made available to participants upon notification of their certificate approval by the ASTM Department on Certification Programs.

13.3 *Unauthorized Claims to ASTM Certificate*—Unauthorized claims to an ASTM certificate should be reported to ASTM. Any unauthorized personnel claiming an ASTM certificate will be required to cease use of the ASTM certificate immediately and remove claims of a certificate from all product literature. Failure to do so will result in legal action.

## **14. Comments and Complaints, Violations, Suspension, or Termination of Certificate**

14.1 *Registering Comments and Complaints*—Comments and complaints regarding the operation of a profession-specific ASTM certificate program are to be submitted, in writing, to the ASTM Department on Certification Programs. This may include claims such as: non-impartiality, discriminatory conditions, and violations of confidentiality. They will be noted in the certification program's quality system documentation, and the sender will receive a written or verbal response regarding ASTM's intended action.

14.1.1 *Participant Response to Complaints*—Complaints received from primary stakeholders about a certificate holder will be forwarded in writing to the participant. The participant shall respond to the ASTM Department of Certification Programs within 15 calendar days and fully address all issues in the complaint.

14.2 *Program Violation*—When a participant breaches a term(s) of the governing documents, they will receive a program violation letter via certified mail from the ASTM Director of Certification Programs. The violation letter will outline what program term(s) has been breached, request for and provisions of corrective action, and instructions for appeal.

14.2.1 *Corrective Action*—The participant shall respond within 30 calendar days of

receipt of letter, in writing, to the ASTM Director of Certification Programs detailing what action is being taken to correct the violation. All corrective action is subject to review and approval by ASTM.

14.2.1.1 *Program violation corrected*—If the participant has corrected the violation, the participant will receive acknowledgement from ASTM’s Director of Certification Programs.

14.2.1.2 *Program violation not corrected*—If the participant has not satisfactorily corrected the violation, the participant will receive a second program violation letter. From the date of the letter, the participant shall have 15 calendar days to make corrections or file an appeal.

14.3 *Appealing a Program Violation*—The participant has 15 calendar days from the date of the violation letter to appeal the violation. The appeals process is documented in Section 15 of this manual. Failure to file an appeal within 15 calendar days from the date of the violation letter forfeits the participant’s opportunity to appeal the violation at a later date.

14.4 *Suspension of Certificate*—A participant who has filed an appeal may be suspended from the program as detailed in the profession-specific operations manual until the appeal is held. If the appeal is upheld, the suspension will be lifted. If the appeal is denied, the participant’s certificate will be withdrawn.

14.5 *Termination of Certificate*—A participant is subject to termination from a certificate program for having a program violation or failing to fulfill program obligations set forth in the governing documents. Termination voids the signed license agreement and cancels the participant’s right to claim an ASTM certificate. Upon termination, the participant’s listing is immediately deleted from the *ASTM Directory of Certificate Holders*. The participant shall discontinue claiming a certificate immediately.

14.6 *Notification of Program Suspension or Termination of a Certificate*—The participant will promptly receive from ASTM a notification confirming its suspension or termination.

## **15. Appeals Process**

15.1 *Appealing a Program Violation*—Appeals of a program violation will be conducted at the request of the participant. To be considered, a written request for an appeal shall be sent to the ASTM Director of Certification Programs, who will coordinate and schedule the appeal hearing with the ASTM Committee on Certification Programs within 15 calendar days of the date on the violation letter. The written appeal shall be specific in stating the reason(s) the violation is unwarranted and, if available, include supporting evidence indicating that a program violation was not committed. Such information should be received by ASTM at least 30 calendar days in advance of the hearing date to allow sufficient time for distribution and review. If an appeal is not received within the time frame allotted, the violation will be upheld. As appropriate a representative of the TAC, the examiner or third-party testing agency, or the certification program staff shall have the opportunity to respond, in writing.

15.1.1 *Conducting an Appeal*—Appeals are conducted via a hearing in which the CCP

votes to uphold, modify, or overturn the subject program violation. Appeal hearings are typically held at ASTM Headquarters in the presence of the participant. If an appeal hearing at ASTM Headquarters will be significantly delayed because of the next meeting date of the CCP, a virtual meeting will be scheduled. The appellant and, as appropriate, a representative of the TAC, examiner or third-party testing agency, or the certification program staff shall be invited to attend. The participant shall participate in the appeal hearing or else forfeit the appeal. In such a case, the program violation stands and no further appeal can be made.

15.1.2 *Format of an Appeal Hearing*—The hearing will provide an opportunity for the appellant to present their objection orally, the certification program representative to provide orally a response, and members of the CCP to question the representatives on the issues raised in the appeal.

15.1.3 *Quorum and Voting Requirements*—A quorum of at least two thirds of the members of the CCP shall be available to hold the appeal hearing. A two-thirds vote of the reviewing body present is required to overturn a violation. In the case of a tie, the program violation will stand.

15.1.4 *Notification*—The CCP will inform the participant of its decision as soon as possible after the hearing and follow up with written confirmation. The participant has 15 calendar days from the date of the CCP notice to take any required corrective action and notify the Director of the Certification Program. If the violation is not corrected within the time frame allotted, the participant's listing(s) will be withdrawn and removed from the *ASTM Directory of Certified Personnel*. If corrective action is taken and completed by the participant in a reasonable period of time after the allotted time frame, the participant will be permitted to apply for reinstatement. Information provided to the CCP by the appeal participants is to be kept confidential.