

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES



ACCREDITATION PROCESS

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Board of Directors
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Mission Statement

- “Improving life safety for citizens and emergency personnel through a national system of professional qualifications.”

Purpose Statement

- The purpose of the Pro Board is to establish an internationally recognized means of acknowledging professional competence in the fire services and related fields.
- The certification of uniform members of public fire departments, both career and volunteer, is the primary goal. However, other individuals and organizations with related interests may also be considered for participation.
- The accreditation process encourages reciprocity among accredited certifying agencies of the Pro Board.

Core Values in Support of our Mission

- We will determine with the advice of our accredited agencies what is in the best interest of improving the professional competence of our fire service constituency.
- We recognize that the credibility and trust of the Pro Board System is our stock in trade and therefore we will adhere to the following tenants:
 - Provide competency verification of individuals and programs
 - Include all interested and affected parties by invitation
 - Judicially guard the high perceived value of the Pro Board by members of the fire service and accredited agencies
 - Comply with the letter and spirit of statutory laws, rules and regulations and those of our Constitution, Bylaws, rules and regulations
- We will meet the needs of the fire/emergency system through our core values.
- We will avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest in all business decisions including publishing, training, testing and standards making.

Core Values in Financial Goals

- We will operate a financially self-supporting system with an ability to grow as necessary to react to changing needs.
- We will operate the highest quality system at the lowest possible cost.
- We will remain financially independent of any outside entity.
- We will operate a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service

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Section I GENERAL PROVISIONS

In accordance with Article VIII of the By-Laws of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board), the Committee on Accreditation (COA) shall function as an arm of the Board of Directors in granting accreditation to agencies that meet the Pro Board criteria.

The primary function of the COA is to evaluate those agencies wishing to become Pro Board accredited against the established criteria for accreditation. The Accreditation Manager can and will provide guidance and assistance to agencies seeking to become accredited.

Acceptance into the system, under the strict guidelines established by the Pro Board - Board of Directors, allows an accredited agency to issue certifications in the National Professional Qualifications System.

A. Eligibility Requirements

The Pro Board recommends that, whenever possible, certification within a state or province shall be administered through a single state or provincial agency. Preference will be given to agencies that can provide documentation of its authority to issue certifications. Examples of authority to issue certification in a state or province may include legislative acts, resolutions, or administrative codes from a state, provincial, territorial, or national government authorizing the entity to certify the professional competence of fire and emergency services personnel.

In addition, the Pro Board will consider applications for accreditation from National Organizations and Overseas Agencies as defined below.

In a state or province where a single unified agency with the authority to certify is not in existence, or is unable or unwilling to provide certification in accordance with the policies of the Pro Board, the COA may consider applications for accreditation from other public sector agencies and intra-state not for profit organizations, as defined below, who can demonstrate that they are willing and able to conform to the policies of the Pro Board and who can provide significant evidence of support for its accreditation as a certifying entity from within its constituency.

Prior to becoming accredited, another public sector agency or an intra-state not for profit organization shall agree to the following condition:

If a state or provincial agency, as defined below, becomes accredited subsequent to another public sector agency or an intra-state not for profit organization in the same state or province, the other public sector agency or an intra-state not for profit organization shall make application to become a delegated agency of the state or provincial agency within six months of that state or provincial agency becoming accredited by the Pro Board.

1. State or Provincial Agencies

The State or Provincial governmental agency or organization that has the statutory responsibility or authority to certify fire and emergency service personnel to the Standards for Certification adopted by the Pro Board.

2. National Organizations

Organizations that serve a constituency and whose activities extend, on a regular basis, beyond the boundaries of a single state or province, such as the military, or national non-profit associations or organizations, that certify fire and emergency services personnel.

3. Overseas Agencies

Agencies outside of North America that are the designated agencies of the government of the country; or are a licensed, registered, or approved agent of the government, empowered to provide certification service. As a condition of Pro Board Accreditation, the agency is not allowed to offer Pro Board accredited certification in the United States or Canada. Certification testing administered by the Agency shall be limited to the country in which the Agency is headquartered.

4. Other Public Service Agencies or Organizations

Agencies that include governmental or public sector recognized entities such as state or provincial agencies, public colleges or universities, fire departments, regional fire department training facilities, or state or provincial fire service constituent organizations such as a Fire Chiefs or Fire Prevention Officer association. The agency may offer Pro Board accredited certifications only in the state or province in which it is located or in which it is approved to certify.

5. Intrastate Not For Profit Organizations

An agency that does not meet the requirements of the *Other Public Service Agencies* defined above. The agency must be a non-profit agency, operating within a state or province, as defined by the United States or Canadian federal regulations. The agency may offer pro Board accredited certifications only in the state or province in which it is located or in which it is approved to certify.

6. For-Profit Companies

For profit companies are not eligible for Pro Board Accreditation

B. Notification

The Committee on Accreditation shall immediately notify the Board of Directors, in writing, when accreditation is granted to an applying agency.

C. Flexibility

The Committee on Accreditation shall administer the National Professional Qualifications System to allow maximum flexibility for applying agencies while meeting the policies of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications.

D. Notification Protocol

Accredited Pro Board agencies agree as a matter of courtesy to notify another Pro Board accredited agency when they are performing certification testing in the other agency's primary accreditation area. This is not a requirement, but a method to improve communication and cooperation.

Section II APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

Acceptance as a certifying agency is a two-fold process under the National Professional Qualifications System. First, the candidate agency must submit an application in the format required by the Committee on Accreditation and shall provide evidence of compliance with all criteria outlined in the application document. Second, a Committee on Accreditation site inspection team shall visit the candidate agency and evaluate their testing and certification program.

- A. All requests for accreditation shall be made, in writing, to the Committee on Accreditation. The first step in the application process is for the applying agency to complete the *Application for Accreditation* (Application for Accreditation and Re-Accreditation North American or Application for Accreditation and Re-Accreditation International) and the *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, and submit with supporting documents to the Committee on Accreditation. The candidate agency shall state whether the application is being submitted for accreditation as a state, provincial, oversea agency, national organization, other public service agency or organization, or an intrastate not for profit organization and document all appropriate laws and agreements. The agency shall provide an organizational chart and list the agency's purpose and any other claims for eligibility.

At a minimum, applicants for New Accreditation shall request, achieve, and maintain accreditation for NFPA Standard 1010, Firefighter I, unless the agency is chartered for a specific standard/level (e.g. IAAI, FDSOA, IAFF, NFPA) or unless there are other extenuating circumstances. Retroactive to January 1, 2015. (adopted 04-24)

- B. The Committee on Accreditation shall exam the *Application for Accreditation*, the *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, and supporting documents to ensure that the applicant meets, in full, the criteria required for an Accredited Agency.
- C. A site visit shall be conducted at a time mutually satisfactory to both the applicant and the Committee on Accreditation, but preferably during a testing session. The Committee on Accreditation Chairperson shall appoint a minimum of two members to perform the inspection. The site visit team will be the contact for all information between the applicant and the Committee on Accreditation.

Section III ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

Agencies applying for accreditation shall be required to document and demonstrate, to the Committee on Accreditation, that the following criteria are diligently maintained. When an accredited agency changes their test development procedures, purchases tests, test questions, or test banks from a person or agency that is different from the agency that was used during the last accreditation site visit, the accredited agency shall immediately notify the Committee on Accreditation, in writing, by submission of an Application for Change in Accredited Practices Form.

SECTION 1: PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION (PA) CRITERIA

CRITERION PA 1

The agency shall ensure that the certification process is nondiscriminatory and available equitably to all people served by the agency.

CRITERION PA 2

Within one year of accreditation or extension to a new standard or level of a standard, procedures shall be in place to address the issue of how people currently holding a non-Pro Board accredited certification for that level will be deemed eligible to enter the Pro Board accredited certification system.

CRITERION PA 3

Procedures shall be in place to address the issue of prerequisites if required by a standard or level of a standard so that all candidates are evaluated in the same manner.

CRITERION PA 4

Procedures shall be in place to ensure the agency is responsive to the views and opinions of organizations representing groups affected by the certification program, such as volunteer firefighter associations, labor organizations, fire chiefs' associations, etc.

CRITERION PA 5

Procedures shall be in place to evaluate and respond fairly to appeals of the certification system including individual test items and/or assessment outcomes.

CRITERION PA 6

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that a fair retest policy is consistently applied to all candidates who fail an examination.

CRITERION PA 7

If the agency delegates its certification authority, procedures shall be in place to ensure compliance with all applicable Pro Board criteria.

CRITERION PA 8

If the agency requires individuals to maintain competency during a specific certification time period, that practice must be applied equitably across all people certified by the agency.

CRITERION PA 9

If the agency recognizes previously achieved certifications (reciprocity), that practice must be applied equitably across all people whose credentials are reviewed by the agency.

SECTION 2: TEST DEVELOPMENT (TD) CRITERIA

CRITERION TD 1

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Professional Qualification Standards, or other standards approved by the Pro Board, are the basis upon which accredited certification testing is conducted.

CRITERION TD 2

The agency shall have the ability to completely test the level(s) of each applicable standard with justifiable test methods.

CRITERION TD 3

Test item development procedures shall be in place to ensure they are valid and reliable.

CRITERION TD 4

Test instrument development procedures shall be in place to ensure they are valid and reliable.

CRITERION TD 5

Test item and test instrument review procedures shall be in place to ensure they are valid and reliable.

CRITERION TD 6

Procedures shall be in place to ensure security of certification cognitive (written) test-item banks, current and previous versions of test instruments, and other associated materials.

SECTION 3: TEST ADMINISTRATION (TA) CRITERIA

CRITERION TA 1

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that adequate notification of examinations is provided to potential candidates.

CRITERION TA 2

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that certification testing is conducted at a frequency, time of day, and geographical location that adequately meets the needs of the certification candidates, departments, and other users of the certification system.

CRITERION TA 3

The agency's facilities and equipment shall be adequate for the testing of all the objectives or Job Performance Requirements of the applicable standard/level(s) for which the agency seeks accreditation.

CRITERION TA 4

Procedures shall be in place to ensure a safe environment and safe operations during certification testing.

CRITERION TA 5

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that tests are assessed by qualified persons who are not involved in the training of the candidate for the performance (psychomotor/process) being tested; qualified persons administer cognitive (written) tests, and qualified persons evaluate cognitive (product)-based tests, portfolio assessments, and other methods.

CRITERION TA 6

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that cognitive (written) tests, cognitive (product)-based tests, performance (psychomotor/process)-based tests, portfolio submissions, or other test methods are administered in a consistent and impartial manner.

CRITERION TA 7

Procedures shall be in place to ensure the confidentiality of a candidate's test performance.

CRITERION TA 8

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that the test results for each candidate and the associated test instruments are securely maintained for an appropriate period of time.

Section IV CERTIFICATION IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

Upon being accredited to conduct certification to a standard or level of a standard, the accredited agency shall, within twelve months of accreditation approval, classify existing positions to establish equivalency with an appropriate level of the standard. The objective of this initial classification process is to establish a baseline for the future progression of members who may have, through prior training and/or experience, achieved qualifications equivalent to the various levels of a standard. Through this initial classification process the accredited agency shall determine how incumbents may seek higher levels of certification without the necessity of starting the certification process at the beginning. In conjunction with this procedure, each accredited agency shall maintain a Prerequisite Requirement Policy in accordance with Section V Prerequisite Requirements and References of these Operational Procedures.

Section V PREREQUISITE REQUIREMENTS AND REFERENCES

Each accredited agency shall maintain a policy that ensures candidates have met the prerequisites identified in the standard or level for which the candidate is seeking certification, prior to certification. The policy must state the agency’s method of verifying that candidates have met the prerequisites as stated in the standard including the job performance requirements for lower levels or other standards required to advance to the next level of certification.

When a standard or level of a standard states, “**the candidate shall meet the requirements of...**” or “**the candidate shall be trained to meet all competencies of...**” the accredited agency must ensure the candidate has met the identified requirements prior to candidate certification.

Acceptable methods of verifying candidate prerequisites identified in the standard include:

1. The accredited agency administers a written exam/skills test adequately covering the job performance requirements as defined in the prerequisite standard or level to ensure the candidate is competent.

Note: If the test questions for the prerequisite are added into the exam for the actual standard or level to which the candidate is testing for certification (e.g., NFPA 472, Ch 5 Core Competencies questions are added to an NFPA 1001 Fire Fighter I exam), those prerequisite questions must be differentiated in the exam and scored separately from the questions for standard/level that the candidate is testing for certification.

2. The candidate supplies the appropriate documentation, as defined by the accredited agency, to verify prerequisite completion prior to certification.
3. The agency verifies training, testing and/or certification of the candidate that meets the prerequisite requirements in its own records.

In all cases the method for determining that prerequisites are met must be applied fairly and consistently to all candidates.

Section VI PROTECTION OF EXISTING POSITIONS

The National Professional Qualifications System shall not be used to render invalid any rank, qualification, or appointment acquired prior to the adoption of any standard. When a level of certification is discontinued or eliminated in a recognized standard, those persons certified to the level that is eliminated shall not be made to revert to a lower level of certification but shall be allowed to progress to the next level of the new standard.

Section VII ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES

Assessment methodologies are utilized to evaluate the Critical Components of Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) of a standard in a manner consistent with NFPA Standards. Agencies may also test Requisite Knowledge and Requisite Skills using these methodologies.

Agencies must have an approved practice in place to determine which methodologies should be used to test the critical components of each JPR completely. Agencies should use the action verbs within each JPR as a guide to help them develop testing instruments consistent with NFPA explanatory material and assessment methodologies identified by the Pro Board.

When an agency determines that a new methodology (one for which the agency is not currently accredited to use) will be necessary to meet the purpose and intent of JPRs, the agency must submit a Change in Accredited Practices application before testing with the new methodology. It is common for the COA to have questions for the agency during the approval process for these changes and it is expected to have the practice approved before use in testing.

For example, an agency which is currently accredited only for Cognitive Written Assessment and Psychomotor Skills determines they wish to use Process Based Assessment as the most effective way to assess JPRs in a standard. The agency shall submit both an Application for Change in Accredited Practices AND an Assessment Methodology Matrix (AMM) for that level indicating which methodologies will be used to assess each of the JPRs. The COA approves Methodologies for each standard and level, not as a blanket approval.

The Pro Board recognizes five methodologies an agency can use. The NFPA identifies these methodologies in the annex material. The Self-Assessment has several criteria that must be addressed if an agency elects to use any of these assessment methodologies. There must be a practice for accurately measuring compliance with a specific Job Performance Requirement and may also be used to assess the Requisite Knowledge or Requisite Skill.

It is preferred that the instructor is not the evaluator; however, where an agency has established an approved evaluation tool to score the product or portfolio (i.e., a rubric, scoring criteria, or model example used by the evaluator to assess all the candidates consistently), it may be acceptable that the instructor evaluates the candidates. This tool must have been developed in accordance with the agency's practices as defined in the Test Development section of the Self-Assessment.

COGNITIVE WRITTEN (KNOWLEDGE) ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY:

Cognitive written (knowledge) assessment methodology is used to evaluate a candidate's subject matter knowledge using a written test in which the candidate is required to provide specific answers to specific questions related to the JPRs of the standard/level to which the candidate is seeking certification. These responses are then securely scored in relation to the answer that has been determined to be correct through the local validation process.

PSYCHOMOTOR (SKILLS) ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY:

Psychomotor (skills) assessment methodology is used to evaluate a candidate's ability to perform physical tasks using a real-time skills performance evaluation. Candidates are required to correctly perform the physical task/skill identified by the critical components of the JPR and are evaluated on their directly observed performance. Correct performance outcome of the skill is normally indicated as part of the yes/no or pass/fail scoring checklist.

PRODUCT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Product assessment methodology is used to evaluate a candidate's ability to perform a cognitive skill which cannot be directly observed but is evaluated on how an individual completes the task outcome. An agency gives the student an assignment that requires the application of knowledge to yield a product. A trained evaluator scores this product after the student submits it. The product is graded using identified scoring criteria such as a rubric.

Examples include creating a/an:

- Budget

- Report
- Proposal
- Memorandum
- Letter
- Lesson plan
- Incident action plan
- Outline

These products may be completed outside of the classroom or out of direct observation of an evaluator and submitted to the evaluator. Products are not assessed in real time and may have more than one acceptable outcome. After a product is submitted, a rubric or other scoring criteria approved by the COA is used to facilitate inter-rater reliability by allowing the evaluators to differentiate consistently between different degrees of candidate performance.

PROCESS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Process Assessment Methodology is used to evaluate a candidate's ability to use mental activity to perform a cognitive skill. An evaluator cannot directly observe this mental process. The trained evaluator grades the student in real time, using identified scoring criteria such as a rubric which may facilitate inter-rater reliability by allowing the evaluator to differentiate consistently between different degrees of candidate performance. There may be more than one acceptable outcome.

An assessment is likely a process if:

- The evaluator is witnessing the application of knowledge in real time and the physical activity is not the focus of the assessment.
- The evaluator is assessing the candidate's knowledge to complete a task by having the candidate verbalize what they are thinking or the mental steps they are making to arrive at an answer.

Process assessments typically require the candidate to apply knowledge through verbalizing ideas or steps to the evaluator. Examples include the evaluation of a candidate:

- Conducting size-up of an emergency
- Conducting an inspection
- Delivering a discipline or counseling session
- Interacting with the subject of an investigation, a member of the public, or while conducting an inspection
- Delivering a presentation
- Administering an examination

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Portfolio assessment methodology is used to verify a candidate's competence in the critical components of one or more JPRs of the appropriate standard by evaluating documentation of the candidate's experience, training, and education. Requisite Knowledge (RK) and Requisite Skills (RK) must be verified by portfolio methodology, tested, or verified through document review. Typically, portfolio assessment may be accomplished without testing the JPRs. While prior learning and experience may form part of the portfolio assessment, the agency must ensure the candidate possesses competency at the time the portfolio is assessed.

Portfolio assessment methodology may be accomplished in combination with other testing or assessment methodologies provided that all JPRs of a given standard are met prior to certification.

The portfolio is evaluated using criteria which have been identified by the agency and approved by the COA through an application for a change in accredited practice. These criteria facilitate inter-rater reliability by allowing the evaluator to consistently give credit for experience, training, and education from outside sources. Agencies wishing to employ this method may create a list of acceptable documents or items for each JPR or assess each submission on an individual basis. Any lists of acceptable documents must be updated with each new edition of the applicable NFPA standard.

The documentation provided by the candidate, which may include signed affidavits, must affirm the candidate has current competency in the critical components of each JPR according to the verbs in each JPR.

It is likely not appropriate to evaluate those standards which are primarily performance (psychomotor/process) using portfolio methodology. Agencies shall use the current edition of the NFPA standard when evaluating portfolios.

OTHER ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY:

The other assessment methodology column in the Assessment Methodology Matrix is used to identify a valid and reliable assessment tool for all or part of a certification assessment that is not described above.

Section VIII EXTENSION OF ACCREDITATION

Extension of Accreditation is the required procedure by which an agency, or delegated agency, that is already accredited by the Pro Board seeks approval from the Committee on Accreditation (COA) to offer accredited certification to a new standard, or level of a standard, for which the agency was not previously accredited.

The procedure requires the agency to:

1. Conduct an internal review of the program administration, test development, and test administration practices, against the agency's original Pro Board Self-Assessment, for the levels in which the agency is seeking extension.
2. Complete and submit an *Application for Extension of Accreditation* based on that assessment.
 - a. If the test development and administration for the new requested standard or new levels is being conducted in the same way as it is for previously accredited levels, it will be affirmed in this application.
 - b. If either the test development or administration is being conducted differently than the previously accredited standard or levels, the variations must be documented and explained on this application. This could include such things as switching to in-house test item development from purchased test banks or initiating product-based evaluations that were not previously approved. If the change results in a methodology that is currently not approved, complete an application for a *Change in Accredited Practices* as well.
3. Complete and submit the *Assessment Methodology Matrix* or similar document approved by COA for each standard or level requested in the *Application for Extension of Accreditation*.
4. Submit any supplemental documentation required by the responses on the *Application for Extension of Accreditation*.

The agency must submit all the required documentation to the Accreditation Manager 30 days prior to the next COA meeting. If there are any areas of the certification process that are being conducted differently for the newly requested standard or levels, please ensure a complete explanation on the *Application for Extension of Accreditation*.

The COA will review the *Application for Extension of Accreditation* at their next scheduled meeting and will make a decision based on the information provided. The Accreditation Manager will advise the agency of the decision of the COA immediately after the meeting.

Extension of Accreditation to Delegated Agencies

The delegated agency shall follow the same practice outlined in the section above. However, the delegated agency shall submit the request and associated documentation to the accredited agency from whom their authority to certify is delegated. After review and approval of the delegated agency's request by the accredited agency, the accredited agency shall submit the following to the COA:

1. The completed delegated agency's *Application of Extension of Accreditation*,
2. The completed delegated agency's *Assessment Methodology Matrices* or similar document approved by COA,
3. Any applicable supplemental documentation, and
4. A letter from the accredited agency endorsing the request for extension of accreditation by the delegated agency.

Note: An accredited agency must be accredited for any level of certification that it delegates. It is permissible for the accredited agency to become accredited to a level that it intends to delegate and not test that level. In that case, all testing is conducted by the delegated agency under the following conditions:

1. The accredited agency has the ability to assess the testing of the level by a delegated agency against the Pro Board criteria and provide the necessary oversight of the process, and
2. A delegated agency meets the Pro Board criteria to certify to that level based on that assessment by the accredited agency and subsequently the COA.

Section IX CHANGE IN ACCREDITED PRACTICES

Pro Board accreditation is granted to agencies based on their practices that are directly related to Pro Board criteria. A significant change in those practices may affect compliance with the criteria.

Note: The criteria on which to base the assessment of the compliance of planned changes can be found in the Self-Assessment document and are categorized as Program Administration (PA), Test Development (TD), and Test Administration (TA) in that document.

Rationale:

The Pro Board recognizes that accredited agencies have a need to make changes to their certification programs over time. However, when changes are planned that significantly alter the practices under which the agency was granted accreditation, there is a possibility that the changes will compromise the agency's compliance with the Pro Board criteria for accreditation. Therefore, a notification and description of such changes to the COA is required. The COA will review submissions in order to ensure continued compliance with the criteria and advise the agency of their findings.

Notification:

The *Application for a Change in Accredited Practices* should be used when there is a planned significant change in any portion of the accredited Program Administration (PA), Test Development (TD), or Test Administration (TA) practices of an accredited agency not previously approved by the COA for use by the agency.

Significant changes are those changes that are directly related to the criteria for accreditation found in the Self Assessment document and alter how the agency meets those criteria.

Examples:

- a new test methodology such as skills tests, product-based assessments, or portfolio-based assessments
- a new third-party test administrator such as the use of a vendor to administer tests.
- a third party developed bank of test items developed by a vendor for which the Agency has not previously been approved.
- any significant change in any of the agency practices covered by the PA, TD, or TA criteria.

Submission:

The *Application for a Change in Accredited Practices* with associated documentation must be submitted prior to making significant changes.

The *Application for a Change in Accredited Practices* with associated documentation must be submitted thirty days prior to the next COA meeting in order to be considered for approval at that next meeting. Otherwise, it will be considered at the following meeting.

Section X DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Accredited agencies may, with the approval of the Committee on Accreditation (COA), delegate or hand-off any or all of their certification authority to other agencies, such as community colleges, technical schools, fire training academies, etc. The right to delegate or hand-off is only available for those standards or levels for which the accredited agency has been approved and accredited. It is not necessary for the accredited agency to also test to the delegated standard or level, provided that the accredited agency is able to provide appropriate oversight.

The accredited agency (primary/parent agency) shall be held accountable to ensure that the delegated agency (secondary agency) performs all testing and certification in full compliance with the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) criteria.

To obtain approval to delegate or hand-off certification authority, the accredited agency shall execute and submit an *Application for Delegation of Authority* to the COA. The COA shall periodically conduct site visits to those locations where testing has been delegated or handed-off. These site visits shall be conducted by one or more members of the COA and one or more representatives from the primary agency.

- A. To obtain approval to delegate or hand-off certification authority, the accredited agency shall meet the following:
1. The delegated agency (secondary agency) desiring to conduct independent certification shall submit a written request for delegation of authority to the accredited agency (primary agency) under whose authority they intend to operate.
 2. The primary agency shall provide an *Application for Delegation of Authority*, an *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, and a copy of the Pro Board's *Operational Procedures*, to the secondary agency.
 3. The secondary agency shall complete the *Application for Delegation of Authority* and *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document* and submit one hard copy and one electronic copy of each to the primary agency along with all supporting documentation. This packet must illustrate how the secondary agency will meet the Pro Board's *Operational Procedures* and *Criteria*.

4. The primary agency shall review the document for completeness, visit the secondary agency, and review the documentation with the secondary agency's program coordinator.
5. The visitation team shall submit a report to the primary agency recommending approval or disapproval of the delegation of authority.
6. If after reviewing the site visitation's report, the primary agency is receptive to the delegation of authority, the primary agency shall request approval from the Committee on Accreditation. The following materials must be submitted as part of the request packet:
 - * *Application for Delegation of Authority*
 - * *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, completed by the secondary agency
 - * Supporting documents including the Site Visit Report prepared by the primary agency
 - * A letter from the primary agency supporting the delegation of authority

B. Upon approval from the Committee on Accreditation, the primary agency may delegate its certification authority for the levels requested to the secondary agency identified in the *Application for Delegation of Authority*. All secondary agencies are subject to periodic site visits by the primary agency and/or the Committee on Accreditation. Those site visits shall be conducted at least every five years prior to the primary agency's re-accreditation evaluation. An updated *Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, shall be executed by the secondary agency, and forwarded to the primary agency, prior to each five-year re-accreditation evaluation of the primary agency and be available for review by the Pro Board site-visit team.

C. When an accredited agency is granted delegation of authority, the secondary agency shall meet all Pro Board criteria and be responsible to the primary agency.

D. Delegation of Authority shall be limited to North American Accredited Agencies or United States Territories.

Section XI SUBMISSIONS OF REQUESTS TO THE COA

Requests for Committee on Accreditation consideration of the following:

- Extension of Accreditation
- Change in Accredited Practices
- Delegating Authority
- A 'Committee Opinion' on an outstanding issue
- Other matters that may arise requiring COA review of pertinent materials.

Shall be submitted to the Accreditation Manager with all the required documentation at least 30 days prior to the next COA meeting to ensure consideration of the issue by the Committee at that meeting.

The date of the next COA meeting will be posted on the Pro Board web page for the COA.

Section XII NATIONAL REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION

The National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) will, upon proper notice by an accredited agency, and by payment of the prescribed fee by either the accredited agency or the certified person(s), place the name(s) of the certified person(s) on the **Register of Certified Fire Service Professionals**. Any person who is successfully tested by an accredited agency to a standard, for which the agency is accredited, is eligible for a National Certificate upon submission of the *Application for National Registration and National Certification*, COA-7 and payment of the prescribed fee. All persons receiving a

National Certificate are automatically placed on the **National Register of Certified Fire Service Professionals**.

Each accredited agency shall ensure that the Pro Board Certification Coordinator has a current listing of the person(s) authorized by the agency to approve and sign the *Application for National*

Registration and National Certification, COA-7. Approved signatures should be submitted by the accredited agency on the *Pro Board Certificate and National Registry Signature Form, COA-8*.

The “Edition Date” of the standard to which candidates are certified will be placed on the Pro Board’s certificates and entered in the National Registry. “Expiration Dates” may be placed on the Pro Board’s certificates when this information is provided by the accredited agency. “Expiration Dates” will not be placed in the National Registry and names will not be removed from the National Registry for reasons other than fraud.

Section XIII STATEMENTS AND LOGOS

Statements and logos of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications, National Professional Qualifications System, Pro Board, and the Committee on Accreditation, are registered and may be used only under the authority granted by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. Accredited agencies that obtain Pro Board certification for all eligible individuals may use the PRO BOARD logo on the agency’s certificate. Authorization for use of the PRO BOARD logo on certificates must be requested, in writing, to the Board of Directors of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. Accredited agencies may use the PRO BOARD logo for marketing purposes in brochures, websites, news releases, magazine articles, etc., within the jurisdiction of the accredited agency.

Section XIV FEES AND CERTIFICATE DISTRIBUTION PLANS

The Board of Directors of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications will establish and administer fees to maintain a fiscally self-supporting program. The applicant shall pay all site visit costs prior to the issuance of accreditation, unless waived by the Board of Directors. The submission of an application indicates the agency’s agreement to meet specific costs incurred, generally limited to travel, lodging, and per diem, for two site-visit evaluators.

To ensure that all accredited agencies support the operations of the National Professional Qualifications System, each accredited agency shall establish a certificate marketing and distribution plan by selecting one of the following certification distribution methods:

- A. The accredited agency will enroll all eligible certification candidates electronically in the Pro Board’s Certification Registry and places the Pro Board ® logo and a unique identification number on the Agency’s Certificates for a basic fee of \$8.00 per Certificate. (The fee per Certificate is reduced to \$7.00 for any Agency that uses the Full Participation Certificate Participation Option and registers an average of between 5,000 and 25,000 Certification Certificates per year during the previous two fiscal years). The agency will provide the names and unique identification numbers to the Pro Board for entry in the National Registry. *This method is required of any Agency applying for Accreditation after May 7, 2015.* This Full Participation Method is expected to continue for Re-Accreditation unless there are extenuating circumstances. Newly Accredited Agencies shall process all eligible certifications into the Pro Board Certification Registry within two years of its initial Accreditation.

- B. The accredited agency will submit bulk certificate applications (10 or more) to the Pro Board at a fee of \$15.00 per certificate. The Pro Board will print and distribute individual certificates and enter candidates' names in the Pro Board's National Registry.
- C. The accredited agency will market Pro Board certificates to certified personnel at a fee of \$20.00 per certificate by ensuring that each candidate certified by the agency is issued an *Application for National Registration and National Certification, COA-7*. The Pro Board will print and distribute individual certificates and enter candidates' names in the Pro Board's National Registry.
- D. Failure of an agency to remit invoiced amounts within 180 days (6 months) of the invoice date will result in notification to the Agency that suspension of its accreditation will occur after one year from the date of the invoice if not paid. Additional time may be allowed if requested in writing to the Treasurer of the Pro Board stating why the invoice has not been paid and when it will be paid. Should the full amount not be received one year after the invoice date, the agency's accreditation will be suspended. Such action may be appealed to the Board of Directors within 30 days of notification of the suspension. Upon such request, the Board Chairman will appoint a three-member Appeals Panel of the Board and a hearing shall be conducted and final determination rendered within 60 days of the request.

Agencies that are in a suspended status shall be subject to the following conditions:

1. The Agency will not be allowed to issue Pro Board recognized certifications
2. The Agency will not be allowed to have an Advisory Committee vote
3. The Agency will not receive subsidized attendance to the Pro Board's Annual Conference
4. The Agency will not be able to run for or serve in an elected or appointed position.

Duplicate and replacement certificates requested by individuals currently entered into the National Registry will be issued upon request at a fee of \$20.00 per certificate.

The annual membership fee for supporting the Pro Board accreditation activities is \$2750.00 per agency, per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). This annual membership fee is **waived** for any agency that produces a minimum of \$2750.00 in certificates using one of the aforementioned plans. Any agency that does not produce a minimum of \$2750.00 in a fiscal year will be invoiced for the difference between \$2750.00 and the total revenue obtained through the agency in that fiscal year.

Fees and participation options for Overseas Agencies are available upon request.

Section XV STANDARD REVISION IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

All NFPA Professional Qualifications standards are subject to revision and publishing of new editions on a regular schedule prescribed by the NFPA. When new editions of standards are published, it is incumbent on accredited agencies to update their certification tests for the standards to which they are accredited to the newly published edition in a timely manner.

Time Limits on Transition to New Editions of NFPA Standards

Accredited agencies are required to transition to offering certification testing to the new edition of a standard to which they are accredited within two years of the new edition being available in addition to the time in accordance with the following table.

New Edition Release Date	Compliance Date
January 1 – June 30	June 30
July 1 – December 31	December 31

A list of the standards, their new edition availability date, and the expiration date of the previous edition is available in the documents section of the Pro Board web site.

No certifications to the previous edition of the standard may be issued to candidates after the expiration date except in the following circumstances. Should the agency fail to update to the new edition of the Standard as delineated below, the agency’s accreditation for that Standard and level(s) may be withdrawn and the agency may be required to reapply for an Extension to their Accreditation should they wish to offer certifications to that Standard in the future:

1. The time limit to transition testing to the new edition of a standard may be extended by six months in the case of extenuating circumstances by submittal of a written request to the Accreditation Manager. The approval of that request will allow testing of the previous edition for an additional six months past the published expiration date. If an agency has a circumstance that creates a compelling need for an additional time extension beyond the initial six months, the agency can make a request through the Accreditation Manager with details surrounding the need and a reasonable time frame for compliance.
2. If the certification testing is linked to specific course work that is accomplished over a period of time and the candidate has started the coursework aligned with the previous edition of the standard within the prescribed time for the agency to transition to the new edition of the standard, the candidate may be tested, and certification issued, to the previous edition of the standard for up to one year past the agency’s transition to testing the new edition of the standard.
3. If the certification testing is accomplished over a period of time and the candidate has started the testing process aligned with the previous edition of the standard within the prescribed time for the agency to transition to the new edition of the standard, the candidate may be tested, and certification issued, to the previous edition of the standard for up to one year past the agency’s transition to testing the new edition of the standard. This includes any re-testing for unsuccessful candidates.
4. If a candidate was tested to a standard within the period that the standard is in effect, the transition period to a new edition, or within any of the exceptions identified above, but did not submit his/her completed documentation at the time of successful completion of the certification testing, the candidate may be entered into the Pro Board certification registry at the time of the submission of the approved documentation without constraints on the time it takes to submit that documentation. This applies to candidates certified by agencies that require the successful candidates to submit their approved documentation of certification to the Pro Board or candidates who want a certificate issued by the Pro Board in addition to what they receive from their accredited certifying agency.

Note: The approved documentation is a completed *Application for National Registration and National Certification* that is signed by the designated accredited agency representative on file with the Pro Board. The accredited certification will be entered into the Pro Board registry for the edition of the standard to which the candidate was tested.

Section XVI RE-CERTIFICATION

Each accredited agency shall establish a re-certification policy. The agency may choose to place a time limitation on their certificates or may choose not to have a certification expiration date. The agency shall advise the Committee on Accreditation, in writing, of their decision.

The Pro Board certificates will contain the date of issuance and the edition of the standard for which the individual is certified. The Pro Board certificates will not contain a time limitation.

Section XVII RE-ACCREDITATION

Accredited Agencies are required to undergo re-accreditation every five years or at such other intervals deemed appropriate by the Committee on Accreditation, but in no case shall a re-accreditation site visit exceed five (5) years. Prior to conducting any re-accreditation site-visit, the Committee on Accreditation shall ensure that the accredited agency submits an *Application for Accreditation or Re-Accreditation* and an *Accreditation/Re-Accreditation Self-Assessment Document*, with supporting documents for review by the COA.

The time limit for re-accreditation may be extended by up to one year (i.e. extended time limit) in the case of extenuating circumstances by submittal of a written request to the Accreditation Manager. Should the time extension be granted, and re-accreditation is granted, the time to the next required re-accreditation shall be reduced by one year, (i.e. the re-accreditation shall be for a period of four years).

Should re-accreditation not be granted after the extended time limit, the agency's accreditation will be suspended until their required re-accreditation is granted. Should the required re-accreditation not be granted during the one-year suspension period, the agency's accreditation will be administratively withdrawn. Such action may be appealed to the Board of Directors within 30 days of notification of the withdrawal. Upon such request, the Board Chairman will appoint a three-member Appeals Panel with the concurrence of the Board and a hearing shall be conducted within 60 days of the request.

Agencies that are in a suspended status shall be subject to the following conditions:

1. The Agency's Accreditation will be considered to have lapsed
2. The Agency will not be allowed to issue Pro Board recognized certifications
3. The Agency will not be allowed to have an Advisory Committee vote
4. The Agency will not receive subsidized attendance to the Pro Board's Annual Conference
5. The Agency will be required to apply as a new Agency if it wishes to be reinstated
6. The Agency will not be able to run for or serve in an elected or appointed position

Section XVIII WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

The Committee on Accreditation may withdraw accreditation of any or all standards or delegation of authority from an agency for failure to comply with these Operational Procedures or any other policies adopted by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. The Committee on Accreditation shall provide 60 days notice to an accredited agency when accreditation is to be withdrawn. Any agency desiring to withdraw their accreditation from the National Professional Qualifications System shall do so, in writing, to the Committee on Accreditation.

Section XIX APPEALS PROCEDURE

An agency having its accreditation withdrawn, or its application denied, by the Committee on Accreditation may appeal such an action by using the following guidelines.

- A. An accredited agency having its accreditation withdrawn or an applicant being denied accreditation, may within 30 days of such notification, request a hearing before the Committee on Accreditation. Such hearings shall be conducted within 60 days of the accredited agency's request. The withdrawal or denial shall be held in abeyance until the Committee on Accreditation hears the appeal and issues an opinion. Accredited agencies may continue to award certifications during the abeyance period.
- B. If an agency's appeal fails at the Committee on Accreditation level, the affected agency may appeal to the Board of Directors within 30 days of such notification. Upon such request, the Board of Directors shall appoint a three-member Appeals Committee and a hearing shall be conducted within 60 days of the request. The withdrawal or denial shall be held in abeyance while the Appeals Committee hears the appeal and issues an opinion. Accredited agencies may continue to award certifications during the abeyance period.
- C. The Board of Directors of the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications will provide written notice of the final action to the affected agency. If withdrawal or denial is upheld, all certification activity representing the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications must cease immediately.

Section XX COMPLAINTS

All complaints should be directed to the Accreditation Manager who will review complaints against the Pro Board system to determine if the complaint is an internal matter within an accredited agency or a complaint against accreditation policies.

Complaints against training, curriculum, instructors, facilities, management and other non-accreditation criteria should be forwarded to the agency in question with no further action.

Complaints received from an individual regarding an Accredited Entity shall be referred to the responsible person at the Accredited Entity to have the matter adjudicated through the established procedure of that entity. The Accreditation Manager shall be notified in writing of any action by the Entity and shall determine if there is any violation of Pro Board policy by the Entity for further action by the Committee on Accreditation. The Accreditation Manager shall maintain a record of the complaint and its adjudication.

Complaints received from an Accredited Entity against another Accredited Entity shall be investigated by a Standing Committee consisting of the Advisory Committee Chair who shall chair the Complaint Committee and the Accreditation Manager. A Subcommittee of the Committee on Accreditation may be appointed by its chairperson to assist in determining if a violation of the Accreditation Criteria has allegedly occurred. The Complaint Committee shall present the allegations to the Entity in question and seek whatever evidence and/or documentation to refute or corroborate the allegation(s). After a determination of facts has been reached, the investigative team shall report to the Executive Secretary with a recommended course of action for the Board of Directors' consideration.

The Complaint Committee shall also investigate Accredited Entity self-reported improprieties that have been discovered. The Accreditation Manager shall require the entity to submit written documentation as to what occurred, how it was discovered, the nature and extent of the offense, what action has been taken

against those involved, and what actions and steps have been implemented to prevent recurrence. The Complaint Committee shall report to the Executive Secretary with a recommended course of action for Board of Directors' consideration.

NOTE: Names of individual(s) in the complaint shall be redacted to the greatest extent possible in order to protect the privacy of the individual(s).

Section XXI RECIPROCITY

The Pro Board encourages complete reciprocity between accredited agencies. Reciprocity is the process by which a Pro Board Accredited Entity recognizes certification(s) issued by another Pro Board Accredited Entity. Each entity should develop local procedures to address reciprocal credit.

Reciprocity may be used as deemed appropriate by the accredited entity. Reciprocal Credit may be given for levels of certification for such matters as advanced entry into an entity's certification system or for fulfillment of certification prerequisites.

Recognition or awarding of Reciprocal Credit does not allow the entity granting such credit to issue a Pro Board recognized certificate solely based upon certification testing administered by another entity. Should the granting entity wish to issue their own certification that may be recognized by the Pro Board, that entity will be required to conduct testing in accordance with their accreditation.

Section XXII COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION POLICY OPINIONS

COA Policy Opinions: Published decisions by the Committee on Accreditation that indicate how, in specific situations, the COA determines compliance with the accreditation criteria.

The list of Opinions with an index and a table indicating their correlation to Pro Board® criteria can be found in the *Documents and Videos* section of the Pro Board® web site.

Development Practice

- COA Policy Opinions are the result of issues or questions raised by accredited agencies or by COA members as a result of a site visit.
- Issues or questions about which COA Policy Opinions are developed are raised by accredited agencies or by COA members as a result of a site visit.
- The COA considers the issue presented and comes to a decision by a majority vote of the COA members.
- The COA's decision applies to all agencies, or all similarly situated agencies; if the opinion is not universal in nature.
- The COA Policy Opinions are published with the date of the opinion and the related accreditation criteria.

Opinion utilization by COA and Agencies

- Agencies are encouraged to be familiar with the COA Policy Opinions and use the published opinions as guidance when developing policy, assessing compliance with accreditation criteria, and completing the Self-Assessment document.
- The COA will use COA Policy Opinions, as applicable, to determine compliance of an agency's policies with Pro Board accreditation criteria and can be cited as reasons for non-compliance during a site visit.