



# **Certification Policies & Procedures Manual**

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Approved by  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)  
Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (CEMS)



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## **Introduction**

The National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) advocates for the profession of spiritual care and educates, certifies, and supports chaplains, clinical pastoral educators, and all members who continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church.

The NACC Certification Commission governs the process of Certification in accordance with the Qualifications and Competencies established for professional chaplaincy. Together, the NACC staff and Certification Commission carry out the process of Certification and establish strategies for efficient and clear processes for managing and administering this process.

This document outlines the Certification policies and procedures that have been approved by the Certification Commission. It serves as an internal document to guide the administration of the Certification process and it informs the Applicant instruction materials for Certification. Qualifications and Competencies are cited throughout the document as appropriate.

## Part One – Board Certified Chaplain (BCC)

NACC Board Certified Chaplains are Catholics who manifest proficiency in Catholic theology and spiritual care praxis and develop competence in the areas of Theory and Practice, Professional Identity and Conduct, Professional Practice Skills, and Organizational Leadership.

Certification is determined through written materials and an Interview in which an Interview Team assesses the Applicant's Competencies for Certification. At the completion of the Interview, the Interview Team recommends or does not recommend the Applicant to the Certification Commission for Certification. It is the decision of the Certification Commission to certify or not to certify.

The NACC encourages Applicants for Certification to engage in a mentoring relationship with a NACC Certified Chaplain or NACC Certified Educator several months before entering the Certification process.

### Prerequisites

- Be a Catholic in good standing, either in the Roman Catholic Church or in [one of the Eastern Catholic Churches in union with Rome](#). Ecclesiastical Endorsement is a requirement for Certification. See [Part Ten for Ecclesiastical Endorsement](#) requirements.
- Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC (Qualification 301.QUA2).
- Satisfactory completion of 4 units (Level I or Level II) of CPE from an accredited ACPE, USCCB/CCA, or CASC/ACSS CPE center (Qualification 301.QUA4). For Board Certification, an Applicant may be granted 1 unit of equivalency for CPE. See [Part Nine](#) for more information.
- Completion of a graduate-level theological degree from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#).

#### **\*Graduate-level theological degree**

The NACC defines a graduate-level theological degree as a graduate degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or

spirituality. Included among the acceptable degrees is the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) degree of the Pontifical Universities and their affiliated institutions. (Qualification 301.QUA3).

Applicant may be granted Graduate Degree Equivalency if he/she meets the requirements for equivalency. See [Part Nine](#) for more information.

- Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- Per membership requirements, current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1).

## Components of the Application

The application portfolio is composed of the following:

1. Documents to be emailed directly to the NACC Office
2. Documents to be submitted through a portal on the NACC website
3. Completion of an ERD Course and successful completion of an ERD Post-Test.

**Documents to be emailed directly to the NACC Office** – Official graduate transcripts can be emailed from the academic institution to [certification@nacc.org](mailto:certification@nacc.org) up to twelve months before the application deadline. The NACC must have the Applicant's transcripts before the Application deadline.

**Documents to be uploaded through the portal on the NACC website** – The documents listed below must be uploaded all at once through the portal on the NACC website. These documents must follow the submission guidelines outlined in the BCC Instruction Booklet. Where applicable, the Applicant must utilize the essay templates which are available on the NACC website. The template text must not be altered by the Applicant. The upload portal is open twice per year according to the timeline posted on the website.

- Supervisor letter of recommendation from place of ministry (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- If applicable, priest/superior letter of recommendation (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- Application Form for Initial Certification

- Autobiography. Applicants must use the Autobiography template.
- Spiritual Care Encounter which provides a current example of the Applicant's provision of Spiritual Care. The Applicant must use the Spiritual Care Encounter template.
- Final CPE Evaluations (both educator and self) from a unit of choice
- Final CPE Evaluations (both educator and self) from the final unit of CPE
- Narrative Statement I, which documents how the Applicant meets each of the NACC-Specific Competencies required for Certification (excluding ITP1.1 and ITP4.1 which are assessed elsewhere). The Applicant must use the Narrative Statement I template.
- Narrative Statement II, which documents how the Applicant meets each of the Common Competencies required for Certification. The Applicant must use the Narrative Statement II template.
- Integrative Theological Essay, (Competency ITP1.1), which addresses the Applicant's familiarity with the documents and theologies of the Competency, including ministerial examples demonstrating how the theologies have enhanced the Applicant's provision of spiritual care. The Applicant must use the Integrative Theological Essay template.
- If applicable, letter from the NACC Certification Commission granting equivalency of one CPE Unit.
- If applicable, letter granting Graduate Degree Equivalency.
- If applicable, Presenter's Reports Part I and II from each previous Interview.

**ERD Course and Post-Test** - NACC Competency ITP4.1 requires Applicants to understand the Ethical and Religious Directives published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To meet the requirements of Competency ITP4.1, the Applicant will complete an eLearning module by the Catholic Health Association (CHA), read the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services, and take a 10 question Post-Test. The Applicant is required to score 80 percent or better to pass the test to be considered for an Interview. The ERDs, CHA eLearning module, and Post-Test are accessible from the NACC website.

The NACC National Office also posts the following other reference documents to help guide the Applicant:

- Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and Qualifications and Competencies for Certification
- Certification Policies & Procedures Manual
- Rubrics for Assessing Common and NACC-specific Competencies.

## Application Process

The Applicant prepares and submits his/her application materials according to the instructions downloaded from the NACC website.

The Applicant submits the application portfolio through the online portal according to the application timeline posted on the NACC website. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant updates his/her member profile, submits bishop/religious superior contact information, and pays the Application fee.

Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the Application Portfolio. If any materials are missing or formatted improperly, the NACC Staff communicates the required corrections to the Applicant. An Interview will not be scheduled until the portfolio is approved.

Once the portfolio is approved, the NACC Staff requests ecclesiastical endorsement from the Applicant's Diocese of ministry.

If the Interview is not scheduled for any reason:

- The Applicant will have the opportunity to reapply for Certification.
- One-third of the Certification application fee will be refunded.
- All documents will be retained according to the document retention policies stated below.

## Interview Process

Once all the application portfolios for the given submission cycle are approved, the NACC Staff forms 3-person Interview Teams in preparation for the Certification Interviews. Interview Teams are composed of NACC certified chaplains.

Prior to the Interview, the NACC Staff sends the Applicant the names of the Interview Team members and the date, time, and location of the Interview. The Applicant reviews Interview Team names for a potential conflict of interest and alerts the NACC Staff if any conflict exists.

The NACC staff will give the Interview Team access to the relevant Applicant electronic materials via a secured web portal within 45 days of the Interview.

In advance of the Interview, the Interview Team meets with an Interview Team Educator (ITE) to be trained in the Interview process and in the writing of the two presenters reports (Presenter's Report Part I and Part II) that are used in the Interview process. The NACC Staff makes the required training materials available to the ITEs and Interview Teams.

The Interview Team meets in advance of the Certification Interview to collaboratively draft the Presenter's Report Part I. An Interview Team Educator reviews the Presenter's Reports Part I to ensure that the report has been written properly.

The Certification Interview (in-person or virtual) is grounded in the NACC Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals. The Applicant meets with an Interview Team, composed of a Chair, Presenter, and Reader, to determine if the Applicant meets the Competencies for Certification of Chaplains.

The Presenter prepares the Presenter's Report Part I and the NACC Staff emails the report to the Applicant 24 hours prior to the time of the Interview. The Applicant must verify receipt of Presenter's Report Part I by email to the NACC Staff.

The Interview is 50 minutes in length.

Following the Interview, the Interview Team deliberates and votes whether 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 to ensure that the report has been written properly.

Following the deliberation process, the Applicant is provided an oral summary of the team's recommendation.

Both Presenter's Reports (Part I and Part II) are forwarded to the Certification Commission for action. In the event of a split vote, the Interview Team must clearly define the rationale of the split vote. Both points of view (recommendations for and against Certification) must be fully explained in the Presenter's Report Part II.

## **Certification Decision**

The Certification Commission reviews the Presenter's Reports and the recommendation of the Interview Team and determines whether the Applicant

meets the Competencies for Board Certification. The Certification Commission has the authority to grant or deny certification, or to offer the Applicant a new interview. The Certification Commission's decision is communicated to the Applicant within 30 days of the Certification Commission's action.

If an Applicant is offered a new Interview by the Certification Commission, all materials are submitted according to established dates and guidelines. The Applicant has the subsequent two application deadlines to submit new materials and engage in a new interview process. This new application and the subsequent Interview are treated as if it is a first-time application. The new Interview Team and Interview Team Educator will have no knowledge of the previous Interview. The Applicant does not have to pay an application fee for the new interview. 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 is relinquished.

#### Certification Granted

- If Certification is granted and the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Applicant receives a notification packet, a certificate, and a copy of the Applicant's Presenter's Report Part II. The Applicant is recognized at the Missioning Ceremony of those newly certified during the Eucharistic Celebration at the next annual conference.
- When Certification is granted and ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Applicant will follow the requirements for maintenance of Certification as per the current NACC Certification Policies & Procedures Manual.

#### Certification Denied

- If Certification is denied, the Applicant has the right to appeal the decision (Competency 307.ACD) or reapply for Certification. Information about the appeals process is included with the notification of denial of Certification along with the Presenter's Report Part II.
- [Part Eleven – Appeals](#), outlines the appeals process and all the potential outcomes and requirements of this process.

## File Retention Policies

If an Applicant is granted Certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the Applicant's electronic Certification file:

- The Certification Application documents submitted to the NACC
- The Ecclesiastical Endorsement letter
- A copy of the NACC letter requesting ecclesiastical endorsement
- A copy of the certificate
- Presenter's Reports Part I and II
- A copy of the NACC letter confirming Certification
- Certification Waivers (if applicable)

If an Applicant is denied Certification, the NACC National Office retains the following in the Applicant's electronic Certification file:

- The Certification Application documents submitted to the NACC.
- Presenter's Reports Part I and II.
- A copy of the NACC letter denying Certification
- Certification Waivers (if applicable)

The NACC National Office also retains the letters and transcripts sent directly to the National Office for the time periods indicated below:

- Official transcript of the graduate-level theological degree or letter granting Graduate Degree Equivalency (NACC to keep for a minimum of 5 years from the date of origin).
- Transcript analysis, if applicable, of academic and theological degree (NACC to keep for a minimum of 5 years from the date of origin).
- Supervisor letter of recommendation (NACC to keep for a minimum of 1 year from date of origin).
- Priest/superior letter of recommendation (NACC to keep for a minimum of 1 year from date of origin).
- Ecclesiastical endorsement (NACC to keep for minimum of 1 year from date of origin).

## **Part Two– Board Certified Chaplain Veterans Affairs (BCC-VA)**

NACC Board Certified Chaplains for Veterans Affairs (BCC-VA) are Catholics who manifest the proficiencies as a Board Certified Chaplain; however, they also demonstrate the development of specialized Competencies to serve this population. BCC-VA is not an advanced Certification beyond board Certification. Rather, it is another option for obtaining initial board Certification through the NACC.

BCC-VA Certification follows the same application and Interview process as the Board Certified Chaplain with a few additions/exceptions which are noted in this section of the document.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisites for BCC-VA include all the prerequisites for Board Certification (See [Part One](#)) with the addition of the following prerequisites:

- Be a priest employed by a Veterans Affairs facility (full time, part time, fee basis or contract basis) as a chaplain. (Qualification 801.QUA5)
- Successful completion of VIRTUS or similar training. (Qualification 801.QUA6)

### **Components of the Application**

The application portfolio is composed of the same documents required for Board Certification (See [Part One](#)) with the additions noted below:

1. Documents to be emailed directly to the NACC Office - same as BCC.
2. Documents to be submitted through a portal on the NACC website – Same as BCC with the following additions:
  - Narrative Statement III, which documents how the Applicant meets each of the NACC-Veterans Affairs Specific Competencies required for Certification. The Applicant must use the Narrative Statement III template.
  - Evidence of employment by a Veterans Affairs facility (full time, part time, fee basis, contract basis) as a chaplain. A copy of the Applicant's listing in the National Chaplain Center Chaplain Directory will suffice.

3. Completion of an ERD Course and successful completion of an ERD Post-Test – same as BCC.

These documents must follow the submission guidelines outlined in the BCC-VA Instruction Booklet.

## **Application Process**

The BCC-VA Application Process is the same as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## **Interview Process**

The Interview process for BCC-VA follows the same process as BCC (See [Part One](#)) with the following exception: At least 1 member of the Interview Team must be currently certified in Veterans Affairs (BCC-VA).

## **Certification Decision**

The Certification Commission action for BCC-VA follows the same process as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## **File Retention Policies**

The file retention procedures for BCC-VA follow the same guidelines as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## Part Three – Certified Associate Chaplain (CAC)

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.

CAC Certification follows the same application and Interview process as the Board Certified Chaplain with a few exceptions which are noted in this section of the document.

### Prerequisites

- Be a Catholic in good standing, either in the Roman Catholic Church or in [one the Eastern Catholic Churches in union with Rome](#). Ecclesiastical Endorsement is a requirement for Certification. See [Part Ten](#) for Ecclesiastical Endorsement requirements.
- Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC (Qualification 701.QUA2).
- 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 CPE equivalencies are granted for the Certified Associate Chaplain level.
- Completion of an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution (Qualification 701.QUA3).
- Completion of a minimum of eighteen 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). See [Part Nine](#) for more information on requesting educational equivalency and for information on how permanent deacons may already fulfill this educational requirement.
- Completion of a minimum of five hundred ministry hours post-second unit of accredited CPE. The five hundred hours may be employment, volunteer

ministry hours, additional accredited CPE unit, or a combination of the three. (Qualification 701.QUA5).

- Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- Per membership requirements, current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1).

## Components of the Application

The application portfolio is composed of the following:

- Documents to be emailed directly to the NACC Office
- Documents to be submitted through a portal on the NACC website.
- Completion of an ERD Course and successful completion of an ERD Post-Test.

**Documents to be emailed directly to the NACC Office** – Official undergraduate and graduate transcripts can be emailed from the academic institution to [certification@nacc.org](mailto:certification@nacc.org) up to twelve months before the application deadline. The NACC must have the Applicant's transcripts before the Application deadline.

**Documents to be uploaded through the portal on the NACC website** – The documents listed below must be uploaded all at once through the portal on the NACC website. These documents must follow the submission guidelines outlined in the CAC Instruction Booklet. Where applicable, the Applicant must utilize the essay templates which are available on the NACC website. The template text must not be altered by the Applicant. The upload portal is open twice per year according to the timeline posted on the website.

- Supervisor letter of recommendation from place of ministry. (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- If applicable, priest/superior letter of recommendation (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- Application Form for Initial Certification
- Autobiography. Applicants must use the Autobiography template.
- Spiritual Care Encounter which provides a current example of the Applicant's provision of Spiritual Care. The Applicant must use the Spiritual Care Encounter template.

- Final CPE Evaluations (both self and educator) from the first unit of a unit of choice, if Applicant has taken more the two units of CPE.
- Final CPE Evaluations (both self and educator) from the final unit of CPE
- CAC Narrative Statement, which documents how the Applicant meets select Common Competencies and select NACC-Specific Competencies. The Applicant must use the CAC Narrative Statement template.
- Integrative Theological Essay, (Competency ITP1.1), which addresses the Applicant's familiarity with the documents and theologies of the Competency, including ministerial examples demonstrating how the theologies have enhanced the Applicant's provision of spiritual care. The Applicant must use the Integrative Theological Essay template.
- CAC Ministry Hours Form, which documents the five hundred ministry hours post-second unit of accredited CPE. The Applicant must use the CAC Ministry Hours template.
- If applicable, letter granting Graduate Credit Equivalency.
- For permanent deacons, if applicable, letter from diocesan diaconal formation director verifying formation program compliance with the *National Directory of Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, See [Part Nine](#) for more information.
- If applicable, Presenter's Reports Part I and II from each previous Interview.

**ERD Course and Post-Test** - NACC Competency ITP4.1 requires Applicants to understand the Ethical and Religious Directives published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To meet the requirements of Competency ITP4.1, the Applicant will complete an eLearning module by the Catholic Health Association (CHA), read the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services, and take a 10 question Post-Test. The Applicant is required to score 80 percent or better to pass the test to be considered for an Interview. The ERDs, CHA eLearning module, and Post-Test are accessible from the NACC website.

The NACC National Office also posts the following other reference documents to help guide the Applicant:

- Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and Qualifications and Competencies for Certification
- Certification Policies & Procedures Manual

## **Application Process**

The CAC Application Process is the same as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## **Interview Process**

The Interview process for CAC follows the same process as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## **Certification Decision**

The Certification Commission action for CAC follows the same process as BCC. [See Part One](#).

## **File Retention Policies**

The file retention policy follows the same guidelines as BCC. See [Part One](#).

## **Part Four – Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification (PCHAC)**

NACC Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification (PCHAC) Chaplains are Catholics who manifest proficiency in utilizing Catholic theology, holistic care, and ethical principles (and working knowledge of the USCCB Ethical and Religious Principles) with interdisciplinary palliative and end-of-life care through the development of advanced specialized Competencies.

The Interview Committee consisting of both NACC and APC/BCCI advanced practice chaplains recommends or does not recommend the Applicant to the Certification Commission for advanced Certification. It is the role of the Certification Commission to review the recommendation of the Interview Committee and make a final decision.

The NACC highly encourages Applicants for advanced Certification to engage in a mentoring relationship with a NACC or BCCI Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certified Chaplain upon entering the Certification process.

### **Prerequisites**

- Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC. (Qualification 601.QUA1)
- Board Certification as a NACC Chaplain or Educator for a minimum of one year. (Qualification 601.QUA2)
- Direct clinical palliative care and/or hospice work experience spanning three consecutive years at a minimum of 520 hours per year. (Qualification 601.QUA3)
- Completion of an intensive palliative care and/or hospice course equivalent to three credit hours (45 hours). (Qualification 601.QUA4)
- Read *Assessing Readiness for PCHAC Certification* in the PCHAC Instruction booklet to assess one's readiness for this specialty advanced practice Certification.
- Suggested reading: Improving the Quality of Spiritual Care as a Dimension of Palliative Care: The Report of the Consensus Conference; Gone from My Sight: The Dying Experience; Hard Choices for Loving People: CPR, Artificial Feeding, Comfort Care, and the Patient with a Life-Threatening Illness.

## Components of the Application

The application portfolio is composed of the following:

- Completed application form
- Progression Essay
- Major Essay
- Three current letters of recommendation
- If applicable, Presenter's Reports Parts I and II from each previous PCHAC Interview and/or Action/Reflection Certification Process

The above documents must be scanned together into one PDF file in the order shown above. The file name of the PDF document must be renamed to follow the following format: *PCHAC Application - LastnameFirstname MMDDYYYY.PDF*, where MMDDYYYY is the submission date.

The essays must follow the guidelines outlined in the PCHAC Instruction Booklet which is downloaded from the NACC website.

The NACC National Office also posts the following other reference documents to help guide the Applicant:

- Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and Qualifications and Competencies for Certification
- Certification Policies & Procedures Manual

## Application Process

The Applicant submits the application file through the online portal according to the application timeline posted on the NACC website. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant updates his/her member profile and pays the Application fee.

The NACC National Office forwards the Applicant materials to the PCHAC Process Committee. The PCHAC Process Committee is composed of NACC and BCCI Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certified Chaplains.

The PCHAC Process Committee evaluates the materials and determines whether the Applicant meets the requirements to move forward with an Interview.

- If the application is incomplete upon this review, the materials will be returned to the Applicant with a notation of the missing components.
- If the PCHAC Process Committee determines that the Applicant is not suitable for advanced practice Certification for any reason, the Committee reserves the right to disqualify the Applicant from the PCHAC Certification process.
- If the Interview is not scheduled for any reason, the application fee will be refunded to the Applicant.

If an Interview is scheduled, the NACC Staff sends the Applicant the names of the Interview Committee and the date and time of the Interview. The Applicant reviews Interview Committee names for a potential conflict of interest and alerts the NACC Staff if any conflict exists.

## Interview Process

The PCHAC Process Committee sends a complete copy of materials to members of the Interview Committee via email.

The Advanced Certification Interview is a virtual or in-person Interview in which the Applicant meets with an Advanced Practice Chaplain Interview Committee to determine if the Applicant meets the Competencies for the Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification (PCHAC).

The Interview Committee is composed of a minimum of three people; the Committee must include both NACC and BCCI Board Certified Chaplains with Specialty Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification.

The Interview Committee meets to collaboratively draft the Presenter's Report Part I.

The Interview Committee prepares and makes available the Presenter's Report Part I to the Applicant by email at least seven days prior to the Interview.

The Interview lasts approximately sixty to ninety minutes.

Following the Interview, the Interview Committee deliberates and decides to either recommend or not to recommend the Applicant to the Certification Commission for

Advanced Certification. All fourteen competencies must be met to attain the Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification (PCHAC).

Following the deliberation process, the Applicant is provided an oral summary of the Interview Committee's recommendation. The Presenter's Reports (Parts I and II) are forwarded to the Certification Commission for action within thirty days of the Interview.

## **Certification Decision**

The Certification Commission reviews the Presenter's Reports and the recommendation of the Interview Committee and determines whether to uphold the recommendation.

The Certification Commission's decision is communicated to the Applicant. The Presenter's Report Part II is also emailed to the Applicant.

If advanced Certification is granted, the Applicant is mailed a notification letter and a certificate. The Applicant will be recognized at the Missioning Ceremony of those newly certified during the Eucharistic Celebration at the next annual conference.

If advanced Certification is denied, the Applicant has a right to appeal the decision (Competency 604.ACD) or reapply for advanced Certification. Information about the appeals process is included with the notification of denial of advanced Certification.

[Part Eleven - Appeals](#), outlines the appeals process and all the potential outcomes and requirements of this process.

## **File Retention Policies**

The PCHAC file retention policy follows the same procedure outlined for BCC. See [Part One](#).

## Part Five – Renewal of Certification

Renewal of Certification is the process by which Catholic Chaplains and CPE Educators certified by the NACC demonstrate their ongoing proficiency as spiritual care providers within the current Competencies Spiritual Care. Renewal of Certification is the continuation of the Certification process, building on recommendations from the previous renewal of Certification or the original Certification. Renewal of Certification is available for BCC, BCC-VA, CAC, BCC-PCHAC, and BCC-E.

The renewal of Certification process takes place every five years.

This renewal is achieved primarily through continuing education in the following areas: Integration of Theory and Practice, Professional Identity and Conduct, Professional Practice Skills, and Organizational Leadership. The Chaplain/Educator incorporates the recommendations from the previous renewal of Certification or the original Certification in formulating plans for education and/or development through a peer review process.

Retired chaplains/educators may have the option of maintaining their Certification utilizing the reduced requirements renewal method if they meet the prerequisites. See [Part Six](#) for more details.

Renewal of Certification for an active Certified Educator is conducted in partnership with ACPE or the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care/Association Canadienne de Soins Spirituels (CASC/ACSS) following the respective Association's standards for peer review and professional development and augmented by NACC requirements for ethics and ecclesiastical endorsement.

### Prerequisites

- Chaplaincy Ministry or Retired Certified membership in the NACC
- Completion of yearly educational hours for the five-year renewal period. (See Competency MNT2 for each level of Certification). Categories for documenting continuing education parallel the current Competencies for Certification. See the Renewal of Certification Education Form for details on how to allocate and document education hours.

- For BCC, BCC-VA, and BCC-PCHAC, fifty hours of education are required per year.
- For CAC, thirty hours of education are required per year.
- Participation in a Peer Review with an active or retired certified Chaplain (not Inactive or Emeritus member) or Educator who is a current member of the NACC with whom the chaplain does not share a reporting relationship. (See Competency MNT1 for each level of Certification.) See the Peer Review Form for more details on selecting a Peer Reviewer and guidelines on the Peer Review process.
- Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- Per membership requirements, current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1).
- For Certified Educators,
  - Full membership and Certification in either the ACPE or CASC/ACSS (Qualification 403).
  - Meets all ongoing personal and professional development, continuing education, and peer review requirements of their respective Association (ACPE or CASC/ACSS) (Qualification 407).

## Components of the Application

The application portfolio for renewal of Certification is composed of the following:

- Application for Renewal of Certification
- Letters of Recommendation –
  - If applicable, priest/superior letter of recommendation (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- Peer Review Form - Please note:
  - Peer Review forms are not required for Retired Members.
  - For Certified Educator Renewal, Applicant submits ACPE or CASC/ACSS continuing Peer Review Report(s).
- Renewal of Certification Education Forms - Five forms, one for each year since last Certification. Please note:
  - Education forms are not required for Retired Members.

- For Certified Educator Renewal, Applicant submits ACPE or CASC/ACSS continuing education report form(s).

The Applicant must utilize the forms which are available on the NACC website. The completed documents must follow the formatting and submission guidelines outlined in the Renewal of Certification Instruction Booklet which is also available on the NACC website.

## **Application Process**

The certified member will receive a reminder letter in December of the fourth year of Certification, directing him/her to the NACC website to download the instructions for renewal and the required application materials.

The Applicant must submit their application portfolio before the expiration date of Certification (December 31st of the fifth year of Certification). The completed application portfolio must be uploaded all at once through the portal on the NACC website.

Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the documents. If any materials are missing, the NACC Staff will communicate the required corrections to the Applicant.

Once the materials are approved, the NACC Staff requests an ecclesiastical endorsement on behalf of the Applicant and forwards the Applicant materials to the Certification Commission. See [Part Ten](#) for more information on ecclesiastical endorsement requirements.

## **Certification Decision**

The Certification Commission reviews the materials to determine if the Applicant meets the Competencies for Renewal of Certification.

If additional information and/or clarifications are required by the Certification Commission before a decision can be made, the Applicant will be notified of any necessary clarifications or corrections. The Certification Commission sets the deadline by which the revised/additional materials must be received.

The NACC National Office notifies the Applicant of the Certification Commission's decision within thirty (30) days of the decision.

- If renewal of Certification is granted and the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Chaplain is issued a new certificate.
- If renewal of Certification is denied, the Chaplain is issued a letter outlining the reason(s) for denial. The Certification Commission's decision is final.

## Extension Requests and Lapsed Renewal

### Extension Requests

If the Chaplain is unable to complete the renewal process before the Certification expiration date, the Chaplain may submit an extension request to the NACC National Office.

- Extensions are evaluated and are granted in one year increments for a maximum of two years and do not alter the original renewal of Certification schedule.
- The Chaplain must submit the appropriate extension fee. The extension request and payment must be received at the NACC National Office before the Certification expiration date.

### Lapsed Renewal

If the Chaplain fails to renew or extend his/her Certification, the Certification will be revoked. Chaplains whose Certification renewal has lapsed beyond the two-year renewal extension period may be eligible to reinstate his/her Certification. See [Part Eight – Reinstating Certification after Lapsed Renewal](#) for eligibility criteria and requirements.

## File Retention Policies

When a Chaplain is granted Renewal of Certification, the NACC National Office retains the following documents:

- The Renewal of Certification Application materials.
- A copy of the certificate.
- A copy of the NACC letter confirming Renewal of Certification.
- A copy of the NACC letter stating exceptions, if applicable.

If a Chaplain is denied Renewal of Certification, the NACC National Office retains the following documents:

- The Renewal of Certification Application materials.
- A copy of the NACC letter denying Renewal of Certification.

## Part Six – Certification in Retirement

Certified NACC members (BCC, BCC-VA, BCC-PCHAC, CAC, BCC-E) who are retired have three options for Certification in retirement:

1. Maintain Certification in retirement with full requirements.
2. Maintain Certification in retirement with reduced requirements.
3. Elect not to maintain Certification in retirement.

The renewal and membership requirements for the three options are summarized below.

<b>Certification Renewal Options</b>	<b>Renewal Requirements</b>	<b>Level of Membership Required</b>
1. Renew with full requirements	Follows same process as <i>Part Five – Renewal of Certification</i> , except that the Renewal of Certification fee is waived.	Retired (Certified)
2. Renew with reduced requirements	Complete application form. Renewal of Certification fee is waived.	Retired (Certified)
3. Elect not to renew	N/A	Retired (Not Certified)

This section outlines the process for retired members who are applying for Renewal of Certification with Reduced Requirements. (Retired members who are applying for renewal of Certification with full requirements, see [Part Five – Renewal of Certification](#) for requirements and procedures.)

The renewal of Certification process takes place every five years.

### Prerequisites

- Retired Membership in the NACC – Retired membership is available for BCC, BCC-VA, CAC, and BCC-E who have maintained membership in the NACC for at least five or more consecutive years and are now retired. To be “retired” is to no longer be in salaried ministry.

- Has maintained Certification for at least five years and has successfully engaged in at least one renewal process.
- Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- Per membership requirements, current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1).

## **Application Process – Renewal with Reduced Requirements**

The renewal process occurs every five years, beginning with the year of initial Certification. The certified member will receive a reminder letter in December of the fourth year of Certification, directing him/her to the NACC website to download the Reduced Requirements Renewal of Certification application form for renewal.

The member completes the Reduced Requirements Renewal of Certification form sometime during the fifth year of Certification. The deadline for submitting the form is December 31<sup>st</sup> of the fifth year of Certification.

## **Certification Decision**

The NACC Staff reviews the application form and membership status and determines if the Retired Certified member meets the requirements for Renewal of Certification with Reduced Requirements, and then the application form is sent to the Certification Commission for vote.

The Applicant is notified of the Certification Commission's decision within thirty days of the decision.

- If Certification is granted, the Applicant will be issued a new certificate.
- If Certification is denied, the Applicant will be issued a letter outlining the reason for the denial. The Certification Commission's decision is final.

## **Returning to Non-Retired Status**

If the Retired Certified member returns to salaried ministry and wishes to revert to full Certification, the following procedures must be followed:

- Submit a letter to the Chair of the NACC Certification Commission, notifying him/her of the member's return to salaried ministry.
- Update membership status to Chaplaincy Ministry and pay the applicable fee.
- If the member is a lay person, obtain a priest/superior letter of recommendation. See [Part Ten](#) for requirements for recommendation letters.
- Obtain an ecclesiastical endorsement. See [Part Ten](#) for the requirements for ecclesiastical endorsements.

The member will receive a confirmation letter from the NACC confirming a return to salaried ministry.

The National Office will retain the notification letter from the member, the confirmation letter from the NACC, and the ecclesiastical endorsement request letter in the member's electronic file.

The education requirement for maintaining Certification will be reinstated at the point of return to salaried ministry. If the return to salaried ministry occurs partway through the year, the number of required hours for education will be prorated.

## **File Retention Policies**

If Renewal of Certification is granted, the NACC will retain the Applicant's application form, certificate, and notification letter in its files. If Certification is denied, the NACC will retain the Applicant's application form and notification letter in its files.

## Part Seven – Recognizing Certifications from Strategic Partners

A NACC member who holds Board Certification with one of the NACC Strategic Partners in Spiritual Care (Strategic Partners) may apply to have his/her Certification recognized by the NACC. Strategic Partners approved for recognition of Certification by the NACC are listed below.

### **Board Certified Chaplain (BCC):**

- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)
- Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS)

### **Certified Associate Chaplain (CAC):**

- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)

### **Educator Certification:**

- ACPE
- Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS)

### **Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification (PCHAC):**

- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)

### **Prerequisites**

- Be a Catholic in good standing, either in the Roman Catholic Church or in [one the Eastern Catholic Churches in union with Rome](#). Ecclesiastical endorsement is a requirement for Certification. See [Part Ten](#) for ecclesiastical endorsement requirements.
- Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC
- Documented proof of membership and valid Certification by one of the accepted Strategic Partners.

- Adherence to the NACC Code of Ethics and knowledge of the requirements of that Code (Code of Ethics 100).
- Per membership requirements, current completion of the NACC Ethics Accountability Statement (Code of Ethics 206.11.1).

## Components of the Application

### Recognition of BCC, CAC or PCHAC

The documents listed below must be uploaded all at once through the portal on the NACC website. These documents must follow the submission guidelines outlined in the Recognition of Certification Instruction Booklet. Where applicable, the Applicant must utilize the essay templates provided. The template text must not be altered by the Applicant.

- Application Form for Recognition of Certification
- If applicable, priest/superior letter of recommendation. (See [Part Ten](#) for more information.)
- Proof of current membership and Certification from Strategic Partner
- Copy of most recent Peer Review Report – A report from the initial Certification process may be submitted if a peer review process has not yet been completed.
- Narrative Statement I, which documents how the Applicant meets each of the NACC-Specific Competencies required for Certification (excluding ITP1.1 and ITP4.1 which are assessed elsewhere). The Applicant must use the Narrative Statement I template.
- Integrative Theological Essay, (Competency ITP1.1), which addresses the Applicant's familiarity with the documents and theologies of the Competency, including ministerial examples demonstrating how the theologies have enhanced the Applicant's provision of spiritual care. The Applicant must use the Integrative Theological Essay template.

**ERD Course and Post-Test** - NACC Competency ITP4.1 requires Applicants to understand the Ethical and Religious Directives published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To meet the requirements of Competency ITP4.1, the Applicant will complete an eLearning module by the Catholic Health Association (CHA), read the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services, and take 10 question Post-Test. The Applicant is required to

score 80 percent or better to pass the test to be considered for an Interview. The ERDs, CHA eLearning module, and Post-Test are accessible from the NACC website.

### Recognition of Educator Certification

For NACC Board Certified Chaplains seeking recognition of Educator Certification, the application fee is waived, and Chaplains need only email the following documents to [certification@nacc.org](mailto:certification@nacc.org):

- Application for Recognition of Certification
- Proof of Current Membership and Certification
- Recent Peer Review Report

The NACC National Office also posts the following other reference documents to help guide the Applicant:

- Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and Qualifications and Competencies for Certification
- Certification Policies & Procedures Manual

### **Application Process**

The Applicant for recognition of BCC, CAC, or PCHAC submits the application portfolio through the online portal. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant updates his/her member profile, submits bishop/religious superior contact information, and pays the application fee.

Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the materials. If any materials are missing or formatted improperly, the NACC Staff will communicate the required corrections to the Applicant.

Once application materials are approved, the NACC requests ecclesiastical endorsement (For recognition of BCC, CAC or PCHAC only). See [Part Ten](#) for policies and procedures for ecclesiastical endorsements. Ecclesiastical endorsement is not required if the Applicant is a NACC BCC applying for recognition of Educator Certification.

The approved application materials are forwarded to the Certification Commission for review.

## Certification Decision

The Certification Commission reviews the materials and determines if the Applicant meets the Competencies for NACC Certification recognition.

The Certification Commission's decision to grant or to deny Certification is communicated to the Applicant within thirty (30) days of the Certification Commission's action.

### Certification Granted

- If Certification is granted and the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Applicant receives a notification packet, and a certificate. The Applicant is recognized at the Missioning Ceremony of those newly certified during the Eucharistic Celebration at the next annual conference.
- When Certification recognition is granted and ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Applicant will follow the requirements for maintenance of Certification as per the current NACC Certification Policies & Procedures Manual.

### Certification Denied

- If Certification is denied, the Applicant has a right to appeal the decision (See ACD section in Competency document for the level of Certification) or reapply for Recognition of Certification. Information about the appeals process is included with the notification of denial of Certification.
- [Part Eleven – Appeals](#), outlines the appeals process and all the potential outcomes and requirements of this process.

## File Retention Policies

The file retention policy for Recognition of Certification follows the same procedure outlined for BCC. See [Part One](#).

## Part Eight – Reinstating Certification after Lapsed Renewal

Certified members are encouraged to maintain their certification by going through the renewal process every 5 years. However, a member whose certification has expired for any reason may be considered for a **one-time** Reinstatement of Certification, provided the member has sound reason for not renewing certification, meets the eligibility criteria, and demonstrates the Competencies for certification. Reinstatement of Certification will be based upon written materials and an informal interview with a Subcommittee of the Certification Commission. Alternatively, the member may go through the Initial Certification process.

### Eligibility Criteria for Certification Reinstatement

- Be a Catholic in good standing, either in the Roman Catholic Church or in [one the Eastern Catholic Churches in union with Rome](#). Ecclesiastical Endorsement is a requirement for certification. See Part Ten for Ecclesiastical Endorsement requirements.
- Chaplaincy Ministry membership in the NACC (Qualification 301.QUA2).
- Has held BCC, BCC-VA, or CAC certification with the NACC for at least five years and has not had certification revoked for an ethics violation or for any other reason. Palliative Care and Hospice Advanced Certification is not eligible for reinstatement.
- Certification with the NACC has expired and is beyond the two years for granting renewal extensions.
- Certification reinstatement has not been granted before.

### Components of the Application

Members who meet the eligibility criteria and wish to apply for Certification Reinstatement will download the Reinstatement of Certification Instruction booklet,

forms, and templates posted on the NACC website. Where applicable, the Applicant must utilize the templates. Document formatting requirements and writing guidelines are specified in the instruction booklet and templates.

The Application components include:

- Application Form
- Explanatory Essay, which includes an explanation of the reasons for surrendering certification and why reinstatement is being sought. The Applicant must use the Explanatory Essay template provided on the NACC website.
- Optional – Employer letter of recommendation. This letter is not required, but permitted, if the Applicant feels that this letter would strengthen his/her request for reinstatement.
- Peer Review Report from last renewal OR Presenter’s Report Part II (PRPII) Report from initial certification process, whichever is most recent.
- If applicable, priest/superior letter of recommendation. See [Part Ten](#) for letter writing requirements.
- Narrative Statements Demonstrating Professional Competencies – The required essays depend on the type of certification that is being requested:

	Narrative Statement I <i>NACC-Specific Competencies</i>	Narrative Statement II <i>Common Competencies</i>	Narrative Statement III <i>Veterans Affairs Competencies</i>	CAC Narrative Statement <i>Select NACC and Common Competencies</i>
BCC	X	X		
BCC-VA	X	X	X	
CAC				X

The Applicant must use the Narrative Statement templates provided on the NACC website. Each of the above templates are the same as those used for Initial Certification. The template text must not be altered by the Applicant.

- Integrative Theological Essay, (Competency ITP1.1), which addresses the Applicant’s familiarity with the documents and theologies of the Competency, including ministerial examples demonstrating how the theologies have enhanced the Applicant’s provision of spiritual care. The Applicant must use the Integrative Theological Essay template.

- ERD Course and Post-Test - NACC Competency ITP4.1 requires Applicants to understand the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To meet the requirements of Competency ITP4.1, the Applicant will complete an eLearning module by the Catholic Health Association (CHA), read the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, and take 10 question Post-Test. The Applicant is required to score 80 percent or better to pass the test to be considered for reinstatement. The ERDs, CHA eLearning module, and Post-Test are accessible from the NACC website.

The NACC National Office also posts the following other reference documents to help guide the Applicant:

- Certification Policies & Procedures Manual
- Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and Qualifications and Competencies for Certification

## Application Process

Upon gathering and completing the application materials, the Applicant uploads all materials per the instructions in the Reinstatement of Certification Instruction Booklet. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant pays the Application fee. The Application fee for Reinstatement of Certification is equal to the Initial Certification fee.

Upon receipt of the materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the forms and templates. If all the materials are completed properly, the application materials will be forwarded to the Chair of the Certification Commission for review. At that time, the NACC Staff will request an ecclesiastical endorsement on behalf of the Applicant. See Part Ten for ecclesiastical endorsement requirements.

The Certification Commission will form a three-person Reinstatement Subcommittee of Certification Commission members to review the materials. This subcommittee will be composed of the Commissioner who currently reviews Recognition of Certification, plus two volunteer Commissioners.

NACC Staff will schedule a 1-hour virtual collegial meeting with the Applicant and the Subcommittee to review the Applicant's spiritual care practice, ministry, service, professional development and understanding and application of the Qualifications and Competencies for Professional Chaplaincy. The Subcommittee will prepare questions for the collegial meeting; the Applicant will receive the questions 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

Following the meeting, the Subcommittee will deliberate and make a recommendation to the Certification Commission. The Subcommittee will complete a Reinstatement of Certification Form which will indicate the names of the members of the Reinstatement Subcommittee, their recommendation for/against reinstatement, and a minimum of 2 recommendations for growth/continuing education for the next five years. Recommendations will be based on Competencies relevant to the certification being sought.

The Certification Commission will vote on the Subcommittee's recommendation. Certification reinstatement will be conditional upon receiving the Applicant's ecclesiastical endorsement. The Applicant will receive a letter and the Reinstatement Report from the Certification Commission Chair communicating the Commission's decision.

The decision of the Certification Commission is final. If certification is reinstated, the Applicant's certification will be valid for 5 years and be eligible for renewal in the fifth year. If certification is not reinstated, the Applicant may apply for NACC certification through a subsequent Initial Certification process.

The NACC will retain the Applicant's application materials according to the NACC's current certification document retention policy.

## Part Nine – Granting Education and CPE Equivalencies

### Education Equivalency for BCC and CAC

**Board Certification (BCC, BCC-VA)** - If an Applicant does not have the required graduate-level theological degree for Board Certification, the Applicant may be granted graduate degree equivalency, if he/she meets the following criteria:

- Applicant must have a completed graduate degree in another field.
- Applicant demonstrates completion of at least **thirty-two** graduate credits of equivalencies in core theological coursework pertinent to NACC Competencies for Board Certification.

**Certified Associate Chaplain (CAC)** - If an Applicant does not have the required eighteen credits of graduate theological education for CAC Certification, the Applicant may be granted graduate credit equivalency if he/she meets the following criteria:

- Applicant must have a completed bachelor's degree.
- Applicant demonstrates completion of at least **eighteen** graduate credits of equivalencies in core theological coursework pertinent to NACC Competencies for CAC Certification.

For both BCC and CAC, the Applicant needs to evidence graduate-level familiarity with the following theological areas: Dogmatic/Systematic Theology (Vatican II/Post Vatican II studies in Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacraments, Liturgy), Scriptures: Hebrew and Christian, Catholic Social Teaching, Ethics/Moral Theology (in addition to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services), Pastoral Theology and Ministry. They can also include Canon Law, Ecumenism, Interreligious/Interfaith Practice. (ITP2.1, ITP2.2, and ITP4.1)

### Considerations for Permanent Deacons

- Deacons who have earned a master's degree in theology or pastoral ministry as part of their formation program, already meet the educational prerequisite for BCC or CAC Certification.
- For deacons who have not earned a master's degree as part of their formation program, but their diocesan formation program **abides** by the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, their diaconal formation satisfies the education

prerequisites for CAC Certification, and it is not necessary to apply for graduate credit equivalency. In this case, the deacon will be required to provide a letter from his Director of Diaconate Formation stating that the formation program abides by the directives in this directory.

- Deacons who have not earned a master's degree as part of their formation program and their diocesan formation program **does not abide** by the *National Directory of Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* will need to apply for educational equivalency.

### Application Components

- Application form – BCC Graduate Degree Equivalency Application or CAC Education Equivalency Application. Forms can be downloaded from the NACC website.
- Pertinent academic transcripts to evidence degrees
- Supporting materials that demonstrate participation in ministerial training, professional development, etc.

The Applicant downloads the application form from the NACC website, completes the materials according to the submission guidelines on the application form.

### Application Process

The Applicant submits the application portfolio through the online portal on the NACC website. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant updates his/her member profile and pays the Application fee.

It is recommended that the Applicant submits education equivalency requests at least nine weeks prior to the Certification application deadline.

Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the application. If any materials are missing or formatted improperly, the NACC Staff communicates the required corrections to the Applicant.

The materials are then forwarded to the Graduate Education Equivalency Subcommittee. The Subcommittee is composed of one or more Certification Commission members. The Subcommittee will review the materials within twenty-one days, and a decision will be given within fourteen days of that review.

- If the Applicant's equivalency request is granted, the Applicant is sent a letter to that effect. The Applicant is instructed to include the approval letter in the Certification application portfolio.
- If the Applicant's equivalency request is not granted, the Applicant's notification letter includes encouragement to continue pursuing study for future Certification, with specific content areas noted, to promote a successful transcript or document review and evaluation in the future.

NACC keeps the notification letters in its files for at least five years.

## CPE Equivalency Guidelines

CPE Equivalency is a process by which an Applicant seeking Board Certification (BCC, BCC-VA) may be granted an Equivalency for one unit of CPE (Qualification 301.QUA4, 801.QUA4) providing the Applicant demonstrates that an educational program, acquired in a way other than through a traditional unit of CPE, successfully meets the NACC Qualifications and Competencies.

An equivalency must be attained through formal academic and/or accredited programs, which are educational, experiential, and supervised. The CPE Equivalency Panel of the Certification Commission decides whether a CPE equivalency request is granted or denied. CPE Equivalency may not be utilized by an Applicant seeking Certification as an Associate Chaplain.

### Prerequisites

- Applicant must have taken at least one full unit of CPE, with accreditation from ACPE, USCCB or CASC/ACSS, prior to applying for equivalency for one of the other three required units.
- Applicant must have participated in a single learning experience (not a combination of several experiences) that contains all the following:
  - The practice of ministry to persons.
  - An adult education, action-reflection model of learning that helps students evaluate their personal and pastoral functioning through case conferences, worship, didactics, spiritual assessments, theological reflection, and group process.
  - A specific time period which consists of at least 400 hours of supervised learning. At least 200 of these hours involve the actual

practice of ministry and at least 100 hours involve group work, reflection, and didactics on the practice of ministry.

- A small group of peers (3-8) in a common learning experience.
- Regular supervisor-directed peer group meetings for the purpose of facilitating learning through interpersonal dynamics and fostering leadership. Students demonstrate leadership in utilizing peer groups for interaction, support, clarification, and confrontation as a means of integrating their personal and pastoral identity.
- Pastoral supervision.
- Theological Reflection on ministry that articulates a pastoral theology that is both contemporary and functional.
- An individual contract for learning developed in dialogue with the supervisor that addresses Integration of Theory and Practice, Professional Identity and Conduct, Professional Practice Skills and Organizational Leadership and criteria for measuring this learning.
- An evaluation of the student's experience, including final evaluations by both student and supervisor.

### Application Components

The Applicant downloads the application form from the NACC website, completes the materials according to the submission guidelines on the application form. The following are the application components:

- CPE Equivalency Application form
- Documentation of previous unit(s) of CPE
  - A written narrative that articulates how the experience (one program) parallels the above requirements with specific examples
  - Documentation of written assignments and didactic sessions that illustrate the curriculum. Specify amount of time for each didactic, other group work, and the practice of ministry
  - A copy of the learning contract negotiated with the Supervisor
  - Final evaluation(s) by the Supervisor signed and dated at the end of the program.
  - Final evaluation(s) by the Applicant signed and dated at the end of the program

## Application Process

The Applicant submits the application materials through the online portal on the NACC website. As part of the application submission process, the Applicant updates his/her member profile and pays the Application fee.

Upon receipt of Applicant materials, the NACC Staff reviews the Applicant's materials to assess the proper completion of the application. If any materials are missing or formatted improperly, the NACC Staff communicates the required corrections to the Applicant.

The materials are then forwarded to the CPE Equivalency Subcommittee, composed of one or more Certification Commission members. The Subcommittee reviews the materials within twenty-one days, and a decision will be given within fourteen days of that review.

The CPE Equivalency Panel reviews the materials and renders a decision. The decision of the CPE Equivalency Panel is final and binding.

The CPE Equivalency Panel notifies the Chair of the Certification Commission of the outcome.

- If CPE Unit Equivalency is granted, the Applicant is sent a notification letter. The CPE Unit Equivalency is granted pending the Applicant's entrance into the Certification process with the NACC. The Certification Commission's letter granting equivalency must be included with the Certification application portfolio.
- If CPE Unit Equivalency is denied, the Applicant is sent a notification letter.

The decision rendered is recorded in the NACC membership database. NACC keeps the decision notification letter in its files for at least five years.

## Part Ten – Requirements for Letters of Recommendation and Ecclesiastical Endorsements

### Letters of Recommendation

#### Supervisor Letter of Recommendation

For those Certifications requiring a Supervisor Letter of Recommendation, Applicant requests from current place of ministry, a letter of recommendation from the person to whom the Applicant reports. 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 must be dated within one year of application for Certification.
- Must be on letterhead addressed to the NACC.
- Must be signed.

#### Priest/Superior Letter of Recommendation (For Lay Persons, Religious Brothers and Religious Sisters only)

The following letters are required for lay persons, religious brothers and religious sisters. (Priest and deacon Applicants do not provide a Priest/Superior letter of Recommendation.)

- **For Lay Persons:** Lay persons request a current letter of recommendation from his/her pastor or from a priest in active ministry within the Applicant's Diocese of Ministry. The priest letter of recommendation assures the NACC that the Applicant is in good standing with the Church; a copy of this letter will be included in the NACC's ecclesiastical endorsement request letter. The priest letter of recommendation is only required for lay persons. The NACC provides letter templates for priests, should they wish to use one in writing the letter. Templates are posted on the NACC website.
- **For Religious Brothers and Sisters:** Religious Brothers and Sisters request a current letter of recommendation from his/her major superior. This letter of recommendation assures the NACC that the Applicant is in good standing with the Church and religious community; a copy of this letter will be included in the NACC's ecclesiastical endorsement request letter.

The Priest/Superior Letter of Recommendation must be:

- Dated within one year of application for Certification.
- On letterhead addressed to the Chair of the NACC Certification Commission.
- Signed.

## Ecclesiastical Endorsements

For Initial Certification, Renewal of Certification, Recognition of Certification, and Reinstatement of Certification for BCC, BCC-VA, and CAC, the NACC National Office requires a current letter of ecclesiastical endorsement (Qualifications QUA1 and MNT3) before granting Certification. Current is defined as within one year of application for Certification.

Ecclesiastical endorsement is formal approval for ministry. For ordained clergy, the endorsement assures the NACC that the ordained minister has faculties to administer the sacraments and is in good standing with the Church. Ecclesiastical endorsement also assures the NACC that any Safe Environment Training requirements (of the endorsing body) have been met by the Applicant.

## Policy

Ecclesiastical endorsements are required as follows:

1. All Applicants (lay, religious, and ordained) require an ecclesiastical endorsement from the Ordinary of the diocese of the Applicant's current ministry.
2. If the Applicant is applying for BCC-VA (Veteran's Affairs) Certification, the Ordinary of the Applicant's ministry is the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of the Military.
3. If the Applicant (lay or clergy) is a [member of an Eastern Catholic Church in communion with Rome or a member of a church in the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter](#), then the ecclesiastical endorsement is required from the Bishop of the Eastern Catholic Church or the Bishop of the Personal Ordinariate. This endorsement takes the place of the endorsement required from the Ordinary of the diocese of the Applicant's current ministry.

## Procedure

If the Applicant applying for Initial Certification has been approved for an Interview or if the member is applying for Renewal of Certification, Recognition of Certification, or Reinstatement of Certification, **the NACC requests ecclesiastical endorsement from the Applicant's diocese of ministry on behalf of the Applicant.** The request will include a copy of the Applicant's Priest/Superior Letter of Recommendation (for lay persons, religious brothers, and religious sisters).

## Moving to a New Diocese

If a priest or deacon moves to a new Diocese of Ministry after the above endorsement is granted, the NACC requires that the priest/deacon notifies the NACC and provides a copy of the letter of good standing that grants faculties to the new Diocese of Ministry.

If a lay person or religious brother/sister changes his/her Diocese of Ministry, ecclesiastical endorsement will be obtained upon the next renewal of certification.

It is the responsibility of the Chaplain to contact the new Diocese to receive safe environment training and background checks as required.

## Part Eleven – Appeals

When an Applicant for Certification receives notification of denial of Certification and believes that NACC Certification procedures were violated and resulted in a negative Certification decision, the right to a timely appeals procedure is ensured.

The Certification Appeals Panel strives to resolve all appeals according to the timeline established below.

### Initiating an Appeal

With the notification of denial of Certification, the Applicant receives information about the appeals process.

If an Applicant chooses to appeal the decision of the Certification Commission, the Applicant has twenty calendar days from the date of the notification of denial of Certification to send a formal appeal to the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel. The formal appeal must be emailed to [certification@nacc.org](mailto:certification@nacc.org) with a read-receipt for date verification. The email will be forwarded by the NACC Staff to the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel.

If the Applicant submits an appeal of the decision of the Certification Commission, the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel may request to speak with the Interview Team Educator and/or the appropriate members of the Interview Team so that additional information relevant to the Applicant's Interview can be provided.

During this timeframe, confidentiality must be maintained for all members involved in the Certification process.

### Components of the Appeal Request

- A Formal letter requesting an appeal and citing relevant NACC Procedures that are alleged violations. An appeal must be based upon the grounds that the decision of the Certification Commission was in disregard or violation of NACC procedures, and that the violation had an impact on the outcome of the Certification process. Examples of grounds for appeal may include:
  - Substantial inaccurate representation of the Applicant's application materials as presented by the Applicant's Interview Team.

- Failure of the Interview Team, the ITE, or the Certification Commission to uphold the policies or follow the procedures of the Certification process.
- Presenter's Reports Part I and II or a copy of the letter from the Certification Commission denying the Certification of Recognition request.

## Appeal Procedures

Within fifteen days of the email receipt of the formal appeal from the Appellant, the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel reviews copies of the Appellant's formal appeal with at least one additional member of the Certification Appeals Panel for the purpose of determining whether the formal appeal:

- Demonstrates probable cause which indicates a potential violation of the NACC Procedures, or
- Does not demonstrate probable cause and it is determined that there are no grounds to proceed.

If it is determined that there are no grounds to proceed, the Appellant is notified by the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel via the NACC National Office. The decision is final.

If it is determined there is probable cause to proceed with the formal appeal, the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel, in consultation with the NACC National Office, appoints a three member Certification Appeals Review Team consisting of a Chair, a Presenter, and a Reader from among the Certification Appeals Panel members. The three Review Team members will not have participated in the initial review of the appeal or have a conflict of interest with the Appellant.

The Appellant is notified of the composition of the Certification Appeals Review Team via email and has ten days from the email date to indicate a conflict of interest with a member of the team by notifying the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel via the NACC National Office.

Within ten days from notification date of the composition of the Certification Appeals Review Team, NACC Staff makes the Appellant's electronic application materials available to the Presenter, Chair and Reader of the Certification Appeals Review Team. This includes the following:

- A copy of the Appellant's formal appeal.
- A copy of Presenter's Reports Part I and II or a copy of the letter from the Certification Commission denying the Recognition request.
- All application materials submitted to the NACC excluding letters of recommendation and transcripts.

No other written or electronic documents are considered in the Certification Appeals Review Team deliberations.

The original Interview Team and/or Interview Team Educator that supervised the Appellant's Interview may be consulted by the Certification Appeals Review Team, if needed. If this consultation is deemed necessary, the NACC Staff will arrange a meeting for the consultation.

## Decision

Within twenty days of the receipt of the Appellant's materials by the Certification Appeals Review Team, the Certification Appeals Review Team deliberates and renders a decision to:

- Uphold the decision of the Certification Commission to deny Certification or,
- Refer the matter back to the Certification Commission, if a violation of the Procedures exists, with a recommendation to either:
  - Grant Certification or Certification recognition, or
  - Grant a new Interview.

The Chair of the Certification Appeals Review Team notifies the Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel of the outcome.

The Chair of the Certification Appeals Panel notifies the NACC National Office of the outcome.

## Outcomes

If the Certification Appeals Review Team upholds the decision of the Certification Commission to deny Certification, the Appellant is notified via email by the NACC

National Office. The decision of the Certification Appeals Review Team regarding upheld denials is final.

If the matter is referred to the Certification Commission, the Commission has thirty days to render a decision on the recommendation.

The Certification Commission's decision to grant or deny Certification or Certification recognition, or to offer the Appellant a new Interview (not applicable to Certification recognition), is communicated to the Appellant via email through the NACC National Office within thirty days of the Certification Commission's action. The decision of the Certification Commission is final.

- If the Appellant is granted Certification or Certification recognition and the ecclesiastical endorsement has been received, the Appellant is sent a notification packet which includes a certificate. The Appellant is recognized at the Missioning Ceremony of those newly certified during the Eucharist Celebration at the next annual conference.
- If the Appellant is denied Certification or Certification recognition, the Appellant will have the opportunity to reapply for Certification. If the Appellant decides to apply again, all Competencies will be considered in subsequent process(es) including but not limited to Competencies cited as not met in previous process(es).
- If the Appellant is offered a new Interview by the Certification Commission (not applicable to Certification recognition):
  - The Interview that initiated the current appeals process will be officially expunged from the Appellant's Certification record.
  - If the Appellant engages in a subsequent Interview process, the Appellant will have to submit new application materials according to the current NACC guidelines. This new application and the subsequent Interview are treated as if it is a first-time application. The new Interview Team and Interview Team Educator will have no knowledge of the previous Interview.
  - If the new Interview is in person, normal and reasonable Interview expenses incurred by the Appellant are paid by the NACC.
  - The Appellant 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.

## File Retention Policy

When an Appellant is granted Certification or Certification recognition, the NACC National Office retains documents according to the policy outlined for each type of Certification.

At the conclusion of the appeal process, the NACC National Office retains the following documents are also retained:

- A copy of the Appellant's formal appeal.
- A copy of the completed Certification Appeals Report Form.
- A copy of the notification letter alerting the Appellant of the decision.