

# The Certified Associate Christian Educator

## Work Experience and Educational Requirements for the Certified Associate Christian Educator

Persons seeking certification as Associate Christian Educator must complete *one* of the following two sets of requirements:

### Set One: "Degree Track"

- A Bachelor's degree in Christian Education or a Bachelor's degree in another field from an accredited college or university.
- Two years' full-time experience or its equivalent as a professional Christian Educator in a PC(USA) church, governing body or agency.\*\*
- Completion of at least three course credits of undergraduate study in each of the first four (4) knowledge/skill areas.
- Completion of course in human development, including faith development (within the last 15 years)
- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Council.
- Completion of Reference Group process.

### Set Two: "Service Track"

- Previously Enrolled Educational Assistant.
- Two years' full-time experience or its equivalent as a professional Christian Educator in a PC(USA) church, governing body or agency, with the years ordinarily dating from the date of being enrolled.\*\*
- Completion of at least three course credits of undergraduate study in each of the first four (4) knowledge/skill areas.
- Completion of course work in Polity and Presbyterian Program/Mission.
- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Council.
- Completion of Reference Group process.

\*\* NOTE: In computing a year of experience, the following equivalents apply:

1 year of full-time employment (at least 25 hours per week); OR,

2 years of half-time employment (16-24 hours per week); OR,

3 years of third-time (10-15 hours per week).

An Educator who has met the work experience requirements may go through the process of certification while unemployed. Upon completion of requirements, a letter stating the Educator will be certified upon employment will be given. There is a three-year limit between completion of certification requirements and accountable employment.

## Steps in the Certified Associate Christian Educator Degree AND Service Tracks

The process leading to certification varies according to one's educational background, previous experience, and level of certification. Getting as much information as one can as early in the process as possible will greatly simplify the process and reduce frustrations with the experience.

### Step One — Application And Reference Group Process

A. The Educator writes to the Associate for Certification (AC) at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offices in Louisville for general information and application form. This can be done electronically through [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators).

B. The AC sends the Application Packet to the Educator that includes:  
Letter with name(s) of Presbytery approved Certification Advisor(s)  
Packet entitled *Certification for Christian Educators*  
Overview of the Certification Process  
Application Form  
Educational Requirements Worksheet  
Checklist for Educator's use  
APCE Membership Information

C. Educator obtains transcripts and/or records of CEUs from educational institutions.

D. Educator contacts a Presbytery-approved Educator Certification Advisor who will work with him or her throughout the process, including the formation of a Reference Group.

E. Educator and Advisor prepare the application form when transcripts are in hand. Advisor and Educator review academic background, previous levels of certification achieved, and the requirements for certification at the appropriate level. The Advisor and Educator identify any missing knowledge and skill areas. Together they create a tentative plan for additional courses found at [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators) and any additional seminary and college course offerings. They submit the plan with transcripts and any other materials to the AC. The Educator ordinarily should wait to begin coursework until after the courses are reviewed and approved by the AC.

F. Educator sends to the AC:  
Application Form  
Educational Requirements Worksheet  
Transcripts  
Tentative Academic Plan (if needed)

G. AC sends a letter to the Educator's Session or Employing Body informing them that the Educator has begun the certification process and requesting their support.

H. AC reviews materials sent by the Educator and the tentative plan for addressing the constitutional requirements. AC also checks for any problems or gaps other than those identified by the Educator.

I. If additional work is needed, AC reviews and approves (or recommends changes in) the tentative academic plan and advises the Educator and Advisor.

J. Educator completes course work; checks with Advisor to be sure all requirements are met; and submits transcripts and/or CEUs for any additional courses taken.

K. Advisor notifies the AC when satisfied with the Educator's plan for proceeding to the exam phase by completing the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.

L. AC writes to Session or employing body, advising it of the applicant's progress and advising them to appoint a representative to the Reference Group. Copies are also sent to the Educator, the Advisor and the Presbytery COM Moderator.

M. AC sends a letter to the Certification Advisor with instructions to begin the Reference Group process.

N. Educator and Advisor together select other persons to serve as a Reference Group. The Reference Group includes:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or employing agency/governing body to whom the Educator is responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

Educator and Advisor set date for first meeting of Reference Group.

## **Step Two — Examination**

A. Educator chooses dates for the examination and submits a written request for the examination from AC.

**Note:** The examination process, including final meetings of the Reference Group must be completed within six (6) months of the date the examination is sent by the AC. Completed Examinations must be in the office of the AC at least six (6) weeks prior to the meeting of the Educator Certification Council at which it is scheduled to be considered (that spring or fall date will be included with the examination).

B. AC sends Educator:

The examination for the appropriate level of certification  
Packaging Instructions for the Exam  
Exam Evaluation forms for the Reference Group and Advisor  
*A Reflection on Learnings* form for the Educator

C. AC sends Advisor:

Instructions for Examination and Reference Group Process  
*Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting*  
*General Reference Group Comments* Form  
*Exam Evaluation for Advisor Only* Form  
*Verification of Employment* Form

D. Educator completes examination at least four (4) weeks prior to the meeting of the Reference Group in order to have time for possible revisions; makes five (5) copies and distributes them as

follows:

One copy to Advisor

One copy to each member of Reference Group (including copy of exam instructions and *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*)

E. Within two (2) weeks, Reference Group meets:

- Examination is discussed
- Exam evaluation forms are discussed and completed
- Educator receives recommendations for revisions to his or her examination **or** Reference Group makes a recommendation for approval to the Certification Council through the AC.
- Evaluation forms are given to Advisor to be compiled and sent to the Certification Council.

F. Educator completes revisions if requested. Reference Group reviews changes and decides to approve exam to be sent to the Council or recommends that an extension should be sought.

G. Advisor and Educator meet to reflect on the process and learnings:

Advisor writes evaluation of Educator in context of process;

Educator reflects on his/her learnings as a result of process.

H. Educator submits four (4) copies of the examination, and the *Reflections on Learning* form to the AC.

I. Advisor sends *Exam Evaluation for Advisors Only*, *Advisor's Summary of Evaluation*, and completed *Verification of Employment Form* to AC.

J. AC sends examination to three readers — one independent reader and two members of the Educator Certification Council.

### **Step Three — Certification**

A. Educator Certification Council meets and reviews all evaluations.

B. Council makes its recommendations, which could be either:

1. The Council grants certification.
2. The Council does not grant certification due to specific deficiencies in the examination.

C. If certification is not recommended, AC writes to Educator with copy to Advisor, outlining additional work to be completed. The letter shall specify how that work is to be submitted for review and subsequent action on certification.

D. If certification is recommended, the AC sends an official letter to the Educator with a copy to Advisor.

E. The Council's action is reported to the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Educator's name is placed on a list that will be included in the following year's General Assembly Directory.

F. AC sends Certificate and suggested Service of Recognition, together with letter of explanation to the Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery. The *Service of Recognition* includes an opportunity for the Educator to present a Statement of Faith to the Presbytery after which the certificate is presented to the Educator by the Presbytery.

G. A letter and appropriate service of recognition is sent to Moderator/Clerk of Session or appropriate person in the Educator's employing agency.

H. AC also advises:

Advisor

Association of Presbyterian Church Educators



## The CACE Examination

The examination process is designed to be **a learning AND a testing process.**

When the Associate for Certification notifies the Educator that all requirements are completed and the Advisor has submitted the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* to the AC, the Educator may order the examination. It is a "take-home, open book" examination that must be completed within a six month time period. As a result, ALL work must be original to the exam rather than material that has been previously a part of coursework. A prominent feature of the process is feedback, especially from a Reference Group who will meet with the Educator to review his or her materials prior to their submission to the Educator Certification Council. The Reference Group can and should offer suggestions to the Educator for improvements in his or her materials. Critical reflection is a key element in any learning process, indicative of the fact that one can gain insights from reflections upon the process as well as the content.

If an educator endures serious illness or a critical personal hardship during the six month exam period resulting in the inability to complete the exam during this time frame, the Educator and the Certification Advisor can contact the AC to discuss the possibility of a leave of absence.

The certification **examinations for the two levels of certification follow a similar process, although the content of the examinations is different.** In searching for indications of one's mastery of the required knowledge and skill areas, the examinations focus on their application in practical settings. Examination readers look for signs of the Educator's relational skills, communication skills, planning skills, educational resource skills, integration of a knowledge base with practice, integration across disciplines, and consistency with the Reformed tradition. This is done through the use of textual and/or thematic Bible studies, program designs, and case studies.

In describing the differences between the levels of certification, the Educator Certification Council has stated that the Certified Christian Educator should be able to demonstrate competence at a master's level and that the Certified Associate Christian Educator should be able to demonstrate competence at a bachelor's level. In practical terms, the council believes that **a master's level means that one has demonstrated the ability to generate original contributions to the field while the bachelor's level indicates that one has the ability to effectively utilize resources and concepts in the field.** The content of the respective examinations attempts to test for those abilities.

It might be noted that the Council recognizes that there will be persons who possess the knowledge and skills of a certification level that they may not have formally achieved. Certification is a means for persons to gain formal recognition for their abilities – and it is the Council's hope that such disparities will provide incentive to the educator to complete certification.

**The examination for Certified Associate Educator** includes five sections (only the first three will be read by the Educator Certification Council for examination purposes):

1. **Biblical Interpretation:** The Educator will choose a biblical theme from a list provided with the examination. The Educator will trace the theme through passages in the Old and New Testaments. The Educator will be asked for reflections on interpretation, theology, and the passages implications for Christian Education.

2. Educational Design: Using a resource that is currently available, the Educator will either teach the design or use it in the training of the teachers who will be teaching it. The goal is for the Educator to demonstrate the ability to utilize and creatively adapt an existing program.
3. Educational Practice: This section consists of two cases studies in which practical problems that call upon one's knowledge and one's relational skills in dealing with members, staff and others are tested as the Educator works out solutions to the situations. The case studies will specify the knowledge and skill areas that should be addressed in responding to the case.
4. Faith Statement: This section consists of two essay questions in which the applicant presents a personal statement of belief and her or his understanding of her or his call to educational ministry. Instructions to the candidate suggest that this section may provide the basis for a statement of faith, i.e., something to share with the church or presbytery.
5. Autobiographical Statement

For both examinations (CCE and CACE), the Reference Group will receive a packet of information, including a copy of *Guidelines for the Reference Group Meeting* and a copy of the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. The AC will send the examination to one independent reader and two Council members for evaluation prior to the council meetings. **All evaluations by independent readers and Council members are anonymous** – that is to say that the readers have no knowledge of who the Educator is, where they live, what type of situation they are in, or any other detail that might give a reader any insight into the identity or makeup of the educator. The evaluations of these readers provide the basis for the Council's decision and recommendations.

**In writing the examination, the Educator needs to be careful to avoid or remove all specific references to a particular congregation, location, person's names, his/her own name, etc. in order to preserve the confidentiality and anonymous nature of the process.**

### **Educator Certification Council Reading and Evaluation**

**Examinations at all levels must be returned to the Associate for Certification at least six (6) weeks prior to the next meeting of the Educator Certification Council** in order to be considered at that meeting (These deadlines are usually early March and mid September). Examinations returned later than that may have to wait for the following meeting of the Council.

When the Associate for Certification has received all papers, including evaluations from independent readers, those papers are submitted to the Council at its next meeting. After carefully reviewing all evaluations from the reference group and exam readers, the Council will make a decision as to whether:

- the papers are complete and the Educator has satisfactorily met the requirements for certification; or
- the papers are complete, but additional attention needs to be given to certain parts of the process. The Council may recommend certification, but suggest that the Advisor and Educator review its comments in the interest of the continuing and professional development of the Educator. In such cases, no further work is required; or
- the papers are complete with relatively minor problems. In these cases, the council will require that certain portions of the exam are rewritten. The details are spelled out in a letter and can usually be addressed with a minimal amount of work.

### **When Certification Is Granted**

When the action of the Council is to grant certification, the Educator and the Advisor are notified. A certificate and a suggested service of recognition (see section G) is sent to the Executive Presbyter of the presbytery, with notification to the Advisor, the Educator and the Moderator or Clerk of the Session of the employing church, or comparable body in other employing agency. Following action by the Council, the name of the newly certified Educator is sent to the Office of the Stated Clerk for inclusion in the next printing of the General Assembly Directory.

### **When Certification Is Not Granted**

For many educators the certification/enrollment process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all parts of the examination (certification) or of the responses to readings (enrollment). In those cases certification/enrollment will not be granted without some additional work. The Educator and the Advisor will receive a copy of a letter outlining the Certification Council's decision and remaining requirements.

### **Possible Outcomes**

1. The Educator Certification Council (ECC) may require that an Educator rewrite or do-over one or more parts of the examination. This usually indicates a serious deficiency. It may involve rewriting a particular part, or the Educator may be requested to choose another biblical passage or design option, or the Educator may be asked to respond to a new set of case studies. This action may delay certification until a subsequent meeting of the council.
2. The ECC may suggest that the Educator participate in additional continuing education in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.
3. The ECC may suggest that the Educator complete additional readings in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.

The examination and reading processes are designed to be learning/growing experiences as well as evaluative experiences. Therefore, an Educator may be asked more than once to rewrite all or part of an examination, or complete additional continuing education or additional readings. It is the hope of the ECC that each Educator will indeed see rewriting and additional continuing education as opportunities to develop professionally.

The Educator Certification Advisor, in working with an Educator who is not granted certification or enrollment is asked to:

1. Interpret to the Educator and, as necessary, the Session and presbytery, the comments, concerns and requirements of the readers, the Reference Group, and/or the Educator Certification Council. The Advisor may need to confer with a Session or presbytery committee that is concerned about the qualifications of an Educator who is requested to rewrite or do over. If appropriate, the interpretation should help them see the value of an Educator who seeks to be professionally accredited, to do whatever is required to aid professional growth and development, and to round out his/her abilities as an Educator.
2. Encourage the Educator to pursue whatever additional requirements have been outlined.

In most cases of a revision or a do over, the Educator will be given three months to complete the do over / revision. This submission will be read by two of the original readers and will be considered for certification at the next meeting of the Council.

**If at any time, the requirements are unclear, or if the Advisor and the Educator have questions about interpreting the action of the Educator Certification Council, the Associate for Certification should be contacted.**