

Participants in the Certification Process and their Roles

There are six key participants in the certification process: the **Educator**, the **Educator Certification Advisor**, the **Reference Group**, the **Educator Certification Council**, the **Associate for Certification**, and the **Governing Bodies (Session and Presbytery)**.

The Educator

Those who seek certification are church professionals with a call to a particular ministry within the church. While some are ministers of Word and Sacrament, the majority of educators who are certified or enrolled are not ministers of Word and Sacrament, but are specialists within the field of Christian education. They are seeking certification as a way of enhancing their own continuing education, submitting their credentials for peer review, and uplifting the profession as a whole by maintaining the highest possible standards for professional preparation, leadership and accountability.

The Educator Certification Advisor

The Educator Certification Advisor provides a link between the Educator Certification Council, the presbytery, and educators seeking to become Certified Educators, Certified Associates, or Enrolled Educational Assistants. The Educator Certification Council and the presbytery choose the Educator Certification Advisor jointly. The Advisor works with the Council in relation to the certification requirements, and with the presbytery or its designated committee in relation to the support and accountability of the presbytery for the applicant's educational ministry.

The Educator Certification Advisor has a number of **key responsibilities**, including the following:

- To become and remain informed about the certification process, and to provide this information to educators, sessions and committees of the presbytery
- To meet with each applicant for certification or enrollment to review the process and the requirements, and to advise the applicant regarding appropriate level for which to apply
- To review with the applicant all applicable academic and experience qualifications, and to assist the educator in finding ways to satisfy unmet requirements
- To assist the applicant for certification in the selection of a Reference Group and to serve as one member of that Reference Group as the presbytery's appointee
- To (offer to) go to the Session or employing body, with the educator, to explain the process and to advocate for support (i.e., time and money) for continuing education and time for writing the exam
- To inform the AC that the Advisor is satisfied with the educators' readiness to

proceed to the exam phase using the *Advisor's Summary of Evaluation of Educator Seeking Certification*.

- To convene and moderate the Reference Group as it reviews and evaluates the educator's responses to examination questions, and to process the results of that review. **PLEASE NOTE: The Educator Certification Council will not accept exams for reading if they have not been approved by the Reference Group and the Advisor.**
- To obtain verification of employment of the educator when the examination or readings are completed
- To assist the educator in fulfilling other requirements and responsibilities established by the presbytery, which might include preparing and presenting a statement of faith, assisting in the writing of a position description of a call, and reviewing the adequacy of compensation with the employing body
- To plan with the educator and the presbytery an appropriate service of certification or to identify ways in which the educator can overcome deficiencies identified by the council upon receipt of the evaluation of the Educator Certification Council
- To function as an advocate for the certification process as a means for insuring excellence in the educational ministry of the church - especially for the presbytery's churches, ministers, and educators
- To fulfill any other requirements outlined by the presbytery

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor should be someone who thoroughly understands the Presbyterian system and knows both the structure and functioning of the particular presbytery in which he/she serves. The person will find it helpful to have a strong background in Christian education, to be certified or seeking certification, and/or be supportive of the concept and the process of certification.

More detail on the role of the Certification Advisor is available in the section of the Handbook entitled "The Certification Advisor."

The Reference Group

The Reference Group will include:

- 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)

The Reference Group is expected to:

- Meet various times with the Educator to provide support and encouragement;
- Review and comment on the Educator's exam before it is sent in its final form to the Certification Council;
- Provide insight into the Educator's professional and personal competencies via use of the *General Reference Group Comments* form at the end of the examination phase;
- Decide to recommend or not to recommend the Educator for certification to the Certification Council.

More detail on the role of the Reference Group is available on the section of the Handbook entitled "The Reference Group."

The Educator Certification Council

The Educator Certification Council is made up of nine persons serving three-year terms at the appointment of the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Criteria for Certification Council Membership (in order of importance):

1. All members will have skills in evaluating educational competencies.
2. All members, when possible, shall be Certified Christian Educators.
3. Representation by men and women, lay and clergy, and racial/ethnic.
4. Representation from as diverse geographical areas and across age lines as possible.

To fulfill the above, the following criteria have been established for council membership:

1. At least one Director of Christian Education.
2. At least one person from the staff of a Middle Governing Body
3. At least one Pastor serving a church that employs a church educator.
4. At least one faculty or staff member of a PC(USA) theological school.
5. At least one Associate Minister of Christian Education.
6. At least one racial/ethnic representative.

In addition, ex-officio members represent Union-PSCE and the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE).

The Council meets twice yearly, usually in the late spring and again in the late fall. The Council is funded by the PC(USA) Office of Vocation and its minutes are subject to review by that body. The Council elects a moderator from among its members. The Associate for Certification, as a staff person of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is responsible for all administrative functions within the application and certification process. Nominations to the Educator Certification Council are always welcome. Those suggesting persons to serve are asked to complete the *Application of Nomination* form.

The Associate for Certification (AC)

The Associate for Certification is a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) staff. The Associate (AC) receives and processes applications, transcripts, examinations, and evaluations. The AC makes judgments about the adequacy of materials received and may correspond with the applicant and/or the Advisor. If there are any questions related to the information submitted on the application and its applicability to the requirements, the AC will delay any further action until the council can review the application.

The AC attends Educator Certification Council meetings and assists Council members as they review the files of applicants. The AC communicates Council decisions to those affected by them, and submits lists of certified and enrolled educators so that they may be included in the General Assembly Directory and the APCE communications. **While the AC is prepared to assist applicants and Advisors regarding particular applications, she/he does not make, nor is expected to defend the actions that are the responsibility of the Council.**

The Associate for Certification can be contacted at:
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Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396
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Governing Bodies

The Session

Generally speaking, “Session” refers to the Session of the employing congregation. Some Educators, of course, may not be directly related to a Session. In such cases, the committee or Board of the agency or governing body to which the Educator relates will serve the same functions and will be involved at the same points as the Session.

The Educator should advise her/his Session when beginning the certification/enrollment process. Early involvement is essential so that the Session may be encouraged to provide continuing education assistance (time and funding) for the Educator while completing course work in order to meet the educational requirements. In addition, the Session can be an advocate for the Educator as he/she continues the process.

There are several places in the process when the Session will be formally involved:

1. When the Educator has made formal application, the clerk of Session or other appropriate body will receive a letter asking for their support as the Educator works through the process.
2. When the Educator is ready to begin the examination phase of the process, the clerk of Session or other appropriate body will receive a letter asking the clerk to appoint a representative to serve as a member of the Reference Group for the Educator.
3. During the Examination Phase, a *Verification of Employment Form* will need to be completed and signed by the individual to whom the Educator is most directly accountable. This may be one of several people such as the Christian Education Committee Chairperson, the Personnel Committee Chairperson or the Moderator.
4. When certification/enrollment is granted, the Clerk of Session will be formally notified. This notification suggests the appropriateness of the congregation/Session formally recognizing the Educator’s achievement.

The Presbytery

The Form of Government of the PC(USA) (G 14.0730) provides “that the presbytery shall support the certification process by:

- a) encouraging educators to seek certification;

- b) providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor; and
- c) encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification.”

While these passages do not establish a specific process for Presbyteries to follow in the certification of church educators, they do make clear the Presbytery’s right and responsibility to provide oversight for the Educator Certification Process. Some Presbyteries take this responsibility very seriously, placing educators under care of the Committee On Preparation for Ministry while they prepare for certification, requiring a statement of faith to be presented to the presbytery. The following suggestions may be helpful as your presbytery considers its role in relation to the certification process:

1. Decide through which committee of presbytery the Educator Certification Advisor(s) will function.
2. Discuss the certification process with concerned individuals in the presbytery. If they feel additional requirements or other means of supporting educators through the process are necessary, write these up as supplementary to the certification process.
3. Prior to the presentation of an individual educator, involve the whole presbytery to look at the certification process and to approve any addenda added as a result of (2) above. Listen seriously to questions and concerns and if possible make adjustments to accommodate them.
4. Be vigilant in balancing “requirements” with “benefits.” Remind presbyters that the main reason for presbytery’s involvement in the process is to support the educator and to recognize the importance of his or her contribution to the presbytery and the church.

The Form of Government also provides that “the presbytery shall provide the following support to the certified Christian educators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4.4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503); grant the privilege of the floor to the certified Christian educator at all its meetings with voice only, and, in the case of the certified Christian educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b (G-11.0407).