



Certified Christian Educator Ministry Experience and Educational Requirements

Persons seeking certification as Certified Christian Educators (CCE) must meet the following minimum requirements (*please see the Educator Handbook for requirements for those who have prior certification as a Certified Associate Christian Educator*):

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
- Hold a bachelor's or a master's degree from an accredited institution
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian education ministry leadership within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency.
- Completion of an online application at <http://educator-certification.pcusa.org> including all electronic transcripts and a current position description/confirmation of volunteer hours.
- Completion of certification-approved courses in the following knowledge/skill areas (a list of approved courses for PC(USA) educator certification and standards related to their content can be found on-line at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators) -
 - At least 3 course credits or 30 hours in each of the following areas:
 - Biblical Interpretation* - This area includes exegetical skills but does not include a requirement to know and use the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek. Courses in Biblical Interpretation are designed to highlight the historic commitment of the Presbyterian tradition to the Scriptures, tying together an understanding of the "word of God written" (Confession of 1967, I.C.2) with "the true word of God" (Second Helvetic Confession 5.001-2). Presbyterian Christian Educators need a foundational comprehension of Scripture as well as the tools to appropriately exegete and interpret the Bible for the context in which they are serving. Courses will teach the basic principles of biblical interpretation through the lens of the Reformed Tradition and teach at least one exegetical method. Exegetical models will encourage historical and cultural readings of texts, and instructors will encourage and equip educators to do research using resources from various reputable sources, modern and historical. The goal of these courses is to ground educators in the method required to make them servants "rightly handling the word of truth" in accordance with the certification standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Successful completion of the Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
 - Reformed Theology* - Courses in the area of Reformed Theology are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian educators with a clear understanding of the theology of the Reformed Tradition, especially as it is expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions. Courses explore the content of those confessions, the historical contexts out of which they arose, and the contemporary significance those confessions have for the life of the church today. By means of varied teaching methods and learning activities (e.g., lectures, small group exercises, discussions, and personal research), students will be able to gain a personal understanding of the Reformed theological tradition. Courses will also allow participants to gain a balanced understanding of the broad landscape of Reformed theological understandings today. It is expected that a course will, minimally, include in-depth study of the Book of Confessions and/or cover extensive reading in the works of Reformed theologians. Successful completion of the Theological Competence Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
 - Religious Education Theory and Practice* - Courses in Religious Education and Practice are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian Educators with an understanding of the theory and theology that informs their basis of choice for education methods and materials. Courses will explore multiple theories for religious education and engage in reading of current literature in religious education theory and practice. They encourage critical

engagement of practical experiences or situations to inspect the underlying theory and practice of education. A successful class participant will be able to relate their own educational activities with a religious education theorist.

Worship and Sacraments - Courses offered in the area of worship and sacraments explore the theology and practice of Christian worship and sacraments from a Reformed perspective. In addition, courses explore the relationships between worship, sacraments, and education in a congregational context. Courses aim to enhance the participants' participation in, leadership of, preparation for, and teaching about worship and sacraments. Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged. Successful completion of the Worship and Sacraments Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.

Human Growth and Faith Development (within the last 15 years) - Courses designed to fulfill the Human Growth and Faith Development content area acknowledge that educational ministry encompasses people of every age. Across the lifespan our learners' thinking, moral reasoning, and faith expressions change as they age. This course explores historical and contemporary developmental theories from a faith perspective. Participants are asked to critique and apply the theories to their educational ministry with all ages. Work in this area must be life-span, include exposure to faith development, and fall within a fifteen-year statute of limitations. It also should include the work of newer theorists especially in cognitive, social and gender issues.

- At least 1.5 credits or 15 hours each (usually offered as one 3 credit course):

Presbyterian Polity - The educator must be able to demonstrate both an understanding of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) polity and pastoral sensitivity in its application. Successful completion of the Church Polity Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.

Presbyterian Program and Mission - This area includes knowledge of current resources and mission emphases of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Graduation from a PC(USA) seminary also fulfills this requirement.

Together, the courses in Presbyterian polity, program, and mission will integrate the study of the Presbyterian Constitution (Book of Confessions and Book of Order) and Program and Mission of the PCUSA into the context of the educator. Scripture, polity, and the structure, mission and program of the PCUSA, as it is described and resourced by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, usually provides the content for this certification course. Critical examination, guided exploration, and careful integration of those key resources provides educators an opportunity to draw upon the richness of the Presbyterian tradition as they take leadership roles in their congregations and ministries. The course will provide opportunities for educators to explore how the polity, program, and mission of the PCUSA will impact, guide, and influence their educational programs and events.

- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of current employment or volunteer work in educational ministry leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upon completion of the examination



Certified Christian Educator Steps in the Process

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.

Step One – Application and Reference Group Process

- A. Educator searches the website www.pcusa.org/christianeducators and reviews the informative overview of the certification process and its requirements.
- B. Educator obtains transcripts from previously completed Master's and/or Bachelor's Degree Programs from accredited institutions as well as verification of previous Educator Certification Courses and current position description or volunteer verification.
- C. Educator begins the application process by creating an account and entering the appropriate application information at <https://educator-certification.pcusa.org/>. As a part of the application, the educator will make connection with an Educator Certification Advisor who is appointed by the presbytery.
- D. The Advisor and Educator identify any missing knowledge and skill areas. Together they create a tentative plan for additional courses using the list of approved courses found at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators and any additional seminary and college course offerings. The Educator ordinarily should wait to begin coursework until after the courses are reviewed and approved by the Coordinator.
- E. Upon application submission, the Coordinator will review the information submitted and verify the requirements already completed while also noting any missing information.
- F. Coordinator sends an email to the Educator's Session, agency or council, with a copy to the presbytery, informing them that the Educator has entered the certification process and requesting their support.
- G. Educator completes course work; checks with Advisor to be sure all requirements are met; and submits relevant transcripts, syllabi, and/or CEUs for any additional courses taken, making updates in the educator's certification account.
- H. Coordinator emails the Session, council or agency to which the Educator is accountable, advising it of the applicant's progress and advising them to appoint a representative to the Reference Group. The Advisor and presbytery stated clerk are also copied.
- I. Advisor notifies the Coordinator when satisfied with the Educator's plan for proceeding to the exam phase by completing the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.
- J. 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 agency/council 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 applicable)
- K. Educator and Advisor set date for first meeting of Reference Group.

Step Two – Examination

- A. Educator emails the coordinator with the specific date on which the exam is requested to be received.
Note: The examination process, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design and final meetings of the Reference Group must be completed within six (6) months of the date the examination is sent by the Coordinator.
- B. Coordinator sends Educator:
The Exam Instructions
- C. Coordinator sends Advisor:
Instructions for Examination and Reference Group Process
Advisor retrieves forms online:
Exam Evaluation forms for the Reference Group and Advisor
Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting
Verification of Ministry Form
- D. Educator completes examination prior to the meeting of the Reference Group in order to have time for possible revisions; sends copies as follows:
To Advisor
To each member of Reference Group (including copy of exam instructions, exam checklist, and *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam* from Advisor)
- E. 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 Committee through the Coordinator.
 - Evaluation forms are given to Advisor to be compiled and sent to the Certification Committee.
- F. Educator completes revisions if requested. Reference Group reviews changes and decides to approve exam to be sent to the ECC 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 the examination and the signed exam checklist electronically to the Coordinator for Certification at certificationexams@pcusa.org.
- I. Advisor sends *Exam Evaluation Form for Advisor Only*, *Advisor's Summary of Evaluation*, and completed *Verification of Ministry Form* to Coordinator.
- J. Coordinator sends examination to three readers – one independent reader and two members of the Educator Certification Committee.

Step Three – Certification

- A. Educator Certification Exam Readers submit evaluations and make their recommendation which could be either:
 - 1. that the readers approve the exam for certification.
 - 2. that the readers do not approve the exam at this time due to specific deficiencies in the examination.
- B. If certification is not recommended, Coordinator 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.
- C. **If certification is recommended, the ECC grants certification at its next meeting and the Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator with a copy to Advisor, along with an invitation to submit the *Reflections on Learning* form.**

In specific cases, the ECC grants certification pending Verification of Ministry (for those who cannot verify employment or volunteer work at the time of the examination).

- a. To be certified, an individual must be gainfully employed or volunteer for ten (10) hours or more per week in educational ministry leadership and be accountable to a board, an agency or a governing body of PC(USA) at the time of exam submission as represented on the Verification of Ministry Form.
 - b. **An individual who has had at least one year of work experience may go through the process while unemployed. Upon completion of requirements, a letter stating that the educator is “certified upon verification of ministry” will be provided. There is a three-year limit between completion of certification requirements and verification of ministry. Employed persons may begin the certification process at any time. (ECC Policies, 5)**
- 1. The ECC's action is reported to the appropriate council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Educator's name is placed on the list of certified Christian educators on the PC (USA) website.
 - 2. Coordinator sends Certificate and suggested Service of Recognition, together with letter of explanation to the appropriate presbytery staff. The Service of Recognition includes an opportunity for the Educator to present a Statement of Faith to the Presbytery after which the Presbytery presents the certificate to the Educator.
 - 3. Communication and appropriate service of recognition is sent to Moderator/Clerk of Session or appropriate person in the Educator's responsible agency or council.
 - 4. Coordinator also notifies Advisor and Association of Presbyterian Church Educators



Certified Christian Educator The CCE Integrative Examination (Exam)

The examination process is designed to be a learning AND an assessment process.

When the Coordinator notifies the Educator that all requirements are completed and the Advisor has submitted the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* to the Coordinator, the Educator may request the examination. It is a "take-home, open book" examination that must be completed within a six-month time period, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design. As a result, ALL work must be original to the exam rather than material that has been previously a part of coursework or work in the church. 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 Committee. 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. It is essential that the reference group highlight any inadequacies in the exam and require them to be addressed before submission to the Coordinator for ECC review,

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 Coordinator to discuss the possibility of a Leave of Absence.

In searching for indications of one's mastery of the required knowledge and skill areas, the examination focuses on the Educator's application of content to 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 within the Reformed tradition.

For the examination, the Reference Group will receive a packet of information from the Advisor, including a copy of *Guidelines for the Reference Group meeting* and a copy of the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. After the Reference Group process and the exam is submitted electronically, the Coordinator will send the examination to one independent reader and two ECC members for evaluation prior to the Committee meetings. All evaluations by independent readers and ECC 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 by these readers provide the basis for the ECC'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 anonymity of the process.

The Educator also needs to refrain from quoting the work(s) of others without proper attribution. Plagiarism is intentionally presenting any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his/her own without giving proper credit to the original source and with disregard for proper academic research procedures. For proper academic research procedure, refer to *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Theses, Term Papers and Dissertations*, 8th edition. If examination readers identify plagiarism within the exam, the writer will be asked to rewrite the plagiarized Part of the exam.

Educator Certification Committee Reading and Evaluation

Examinations will be reviewed by the educator certification exam readers as they are received. Exam results will ordinarily be given no later than two months after all parts were submitted to certificationexams@pcusa.org.

When Certification Is Not Granted

For many Educators, the certification process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all, parts of the examination. In those cases certification will not be granted without some additional work. The Educator and the Advisor will receive a copy of a letter outlining the ECC's decision and remaining requirements.

Possible Outcomes

1. The Educator Certification Committee may require that an Educator rewrite one or more parts of the examination. This usually indicates a serious deficiency. It may involve rewriting a particular part. This action may delay certification until a subsequent meeting of the Committee.
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. It is the hope of the ECC that each Educator will 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 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 Committee. 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. 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 rewrite, the Educator will be given three months to complete the rewrite. This submission will be read by at least one of the original readers. Following the receipt of the exam rewrite, readers will ordinarily submit comments to Coordinator within 2 months. (When the exam is resubmitted to the Committee, ordinarily it will be read by the same committee readers who read the original exam. If two readers come to different conclusions regarding the rewritten exam, a third reader will be asked to evaluate the exam rewrite.)

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



Please Note: This is an excerpt from the *Educator Certification Handbook*. For more information, please download it in its entirety at pcusa.org/christianeducators.