

GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE GROUP MEETINGS

PC(USA) Educator Certification

The Educator Certification Advisor and each member of the Reference Group are vital links in the certification process, providing a context when serious attention can be given to both the person and the process while helping to maintain standards for certification. The Reference Group meeting is the first of three checkpoints in the integrative project process: 1) Reference Group, 2) Integrative Process Readers, 3) Educator Certification Committee

The Educator Certification Advisor and the Reference Group are responsible to the Educator Certification Committee and the presbytery for the integrity of the process. It is critically important that the group play close attention to the Guidelines for Readers. This is the resource that the Integrative Project Readers will use as they evaluate the integrative project. It is FAR better for the educator to receive feedback of needed changes early in the process than to submit a project with obvious needs for revision. Your help is needed to ensure that the educator's work is represented at its very best as a result of your review of their work.

Reference Group Meeting Process

Step I

The first meeting of the Reference Group is to clarify the role of the Group in the certification process and to ask questions. Allow Reference Group members a chance to become more familiar with the process and the expectations. As part of the conversation, invite the Educator to share their discernment to a sense of calling as an educator. Consider using some community building activities to allow members a chance to get to know each other and then select portions of the Certification Handbook to share as the Reference Group members become more familiar with the certification process and their role. The Certification Advisor is the moderator of these meetings. The following dates should be set at this time:

1. Date for the educator's integrative project to be submitted to the Reference Group for careful review (recommended at least 4 weeks before the project is due for submission to the Certification Coordinator)
2. Date for the Reference Group meeting to review the integrative project with the Educator (recommended at least two weeks before the project is due for submission to the Certification Coordinator).
3. Date for any corrections or changes to the project to be reviewed by the Certification Advisor and other appropriate parties.

Step II

Between meetings, members of the Reference Group are to maintain contact with the Educator, to offer support and encouragement. Having the Group as a whole, or individuals therein, read portions of the project as it progresses is also appropriate. They should keep a careful and critical eye on content as well as how accurately the educator has followed the project instructions. The Educator should be encouraged to use the Certification Advisor and the other members of the Reference group as a sounding board, particularly as they begin planning the educational design and prior to teaching that design.

Step III

The Reference Group should meet within two weeks after receiving the integrative project from the Educator, completing the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Integrative Project* as a form of evaluation.

1. Reference Group meets with Educator.

- a. Review project responses using previously completed *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Integrative Project* form.
- b. With Educator, identify strengths and areas needing improvement.
- c. Hear and discuss the Educator's understanding of the educational task and their perception of relationships with pastor, staff, congregants and presbytery.
- d. Discuss Educator's plans for future professional development.

2. Reference Group meets without the Educator present to compare perceptions of Educator's strengths and areas needing improvement using the *General Reference Group Comments* form and to make decisions about asking the educator to make major and/or minor changes on the integrative project. Encourage each member of the Reference Group to consider whether they could teach the design using only the lesson plans and materials within them. Again, it is critically important for the Reference Group to make careful and frank suggestions for improvements and for the educator to make revisions as suggested before submitting the project.

4. If changes are necessary, the Reference Group will decide how the changes will be evaluated: by the whole group meeting again, by one or two people from the Reference Group or by the Advisor.

5. If changes are not needed, the Reference Group moves to recommend Certification, and the Advisor and the Educator work together to get all the papers submitted to the Educator Certification Committee.