

APPALACHIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE



CREDENTIALING POLICY MANUAL

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I. Reference Documents

- ASTM F3068 - 14
- http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1832-25045-2087/fqs_guide_2012dec.pdf
- ASRC FTM PTB
- ASRC FTL PTB

II. Definitions

- Applicant - person applying for an ASRC certification
- ASRC Credentialing Board – A group charged with maintaining the ASRC Credentialing System as defined in this document.
- ASRC Examiner - a member of the ASRC Evaluation and Training Cadre.
- Group Training Officer (GTO) - the Group Training Officer responsible for developing the training program for an ASRC Group. For the purposes of this document, this refers to the training officer responsible for the Group to which the applicant belongs, unless otherwise specified.
- Member - an ASRC member who has been approved by a Group Training Officer (GTO) to sign off mastery, of some or all skills, for Position Task Books for the members of the GTO's Group. The Qualified Evaluator may be a member of the GTO's Group, a member of another Group, or an ASRC Member-at-Large. A GTO is by definition a Qualified Evaluator for that Group.
- Subject Matter Block – A broad grouping of skills whose functions are related. For example, "Navigation" includes use of a map-, compass-, and GPS-related skills.

III. Initial Certification Process

1. The Group Training Officer for each ASRC Group shall be responsible for developing a training curriculum that ensures that each Group member is compliant with the ASRC Training Standards.
2. The GTO shall issue the appropriate Position Task Book (PTB) to each Group member for each ASRC certification that the Group member wishes to, and are eligible apply for.
3. At any mutually agreeable time, a member may demonstrate mastery of a skill before a Qualified Evaluator. If the QE determines that the member's mastery of the skill is in compliance with the ASRC Training Standard, the QE shall sign and date the member's PTB.
4. A member shall begin the application process for an ASRC Certification by submitting a completed PTB to their GTO. All skill sign-offs must have been completed within the 36 months immediately preceding the completion and submission of the PTB.
5. The GTO shall review the PTB to ensure that all skill sign-offs are complete and current. If any deficiency is found, the PTB shall be returned to the applicant. If the PTB is complete and correct, the GTO shall:
 - 5.1. Sign and date the GTO approval form in the PTB.
 - 5.2. Send the PTB to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
 - 5.3. Schedule a third-party examination, to take place within 60 days.
6. ASRC Examiners (either as individuals or as a group) will administer an examination to the applicant.

- 6.1. If the examination is not passed, the ASRC Examiner(s) will indicate to the applicant the areas in which the applicant needs to again demonstrate mastery to a Qualified Evaluator (Return to step 3, above). ASRC Examiners shall not require applicants to demonstrate mastery of material in subject matter blocks that have been successfully completed.
- 6.2. If the examination is passed, the ASRC Examiners(s) will notify the applicant, sign and date the Examiner Approval Report in the PTB, and submit the form to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
7. When the ASRC Credentialing Board receives a completed certification packet with the GTO and Examiner approvals, the ASRC Credentialing Board shall review the packet, issue a decision on the applicant's certification, and notify the applicant and GTO within 14 days.
 - 7.1. If any defects are found, the PTB will be returned to the appropriate level of review.

Guidance: As a rule, defects should be addressed in a way that requires the least remedial effort necessary. (For example: It shall not be necessary to repeat an examination after a defect in a single skill is addressed).
 - 7.2. Upon acceptance of the Applicant's Completed PTB, the ASRC Credentialing Board shall issue a certificate as provided in Section VI.

The ASRC Credentialing Board shall be responsible for creating and maintaining a Recourse Procedure, by which an applicant may request an intervention by the board or its representative in the event that the applicant is subject to inappropriate interference in the credentialing process.

IV. Initial Certification Examination Process

A. General

1. In order to be eligible for examination, an applicant must fulfil the following conditions:
 - a. The applicant must have submitted a completed PTB to the applicant's GTO, and
 - b. The GTO must have reviewed the applicant's submitted PTB for completeness, and approved the applicant for examination.
 - c. If the applicant has previously been subject to an examination for the desired certification, the results of that examination must be submitted with the PTB. In this case, the exam will be targeted to areas in which the applicant had difficulty previously.
2. The applicant will be subject to a written exam and a practical exam (See sections B and C, below) formally administered by ASRC Examiner(s).
3. Both written and practical exams will be comprised of material drawn from "subject matter blocks" as specified for the certification being sought.
4. Once the applicant successfully completes a subject matter block with a passing score, the ASRC Examiner shall sign-off that block. This endorsement shall be valid for 120 days from the date that the examiner signed-off that block.
5. Once all subject matter blocks (written and practical) are completed and have valid endorsements, the ASRC Examiner shall process the PTB as described in section III of this document.
6. If an applicant's score for a subject matter block is less than the minimum passing score, then the ASRSC Examiner shall not endorse the relevant portion of the applicant's PTB, but shall return the PTB to the applicant.
7. The practical exam shall require that at least 50% of the scenarios are administered and scored by an ASRC Examiner who is not a member of the applicant's Group.

B. Initial Certification Written Examination

1. A pool of multiple choice questions shall be maintained for each subject matter block.
2. When an examination is requested for an applicant, questions shall be randomly selected from the pool of questions maintained for each block according to the exam generation matrix maintained by the ASRC Credentialing Board.
3. The written test may be administered by any ASRC Examiner, including the GTO.
4. No test materials may remain in the possession of the applicant after the test is completed.
5. A key will be provided to the ASRC Examiner to ensure that the applicant receives prompt feedback following the test.
6. Irrespective of the applicant's score, a copy of the Applicant's exam answer sheet shall be signed by the ASRC Examiner and sent to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
7. If the applicant wishes to challenge their score on the examination, they may submit a request in writing to the ASRC Credentialing Board. The ASRC Credentialing Board review shall be limited to: rescoring the exam and verifying the validity of questions and answers which the applicant has specifically challenged.
 - a. If a question is determined to be invalid, the score shall be updated as though that question were never part of the exam.
8. Every examination will be accompanied by a feedback form with instructions for the applicant to discuss any issues with any aspect of the examination. These forms shall be submitted to the ASRC Credentialing Board with the applicant's answer key.

C. Initial Certification Practical Examination

1. A pool of testing scenarios shall be maintained for each subject matter block.
2. When an exam is requested for an applicant, 2 scenarios shall be randomly selected from the pool of scenarios maintained for each block
3. Test scenarios for each subject matter block may be administered by any ASRC Examiner, including the applicant's GTO, so long as no less than 50% of scenarios are scored by an ASRC Examiner from outside the applicant's Group.
4. No test materials may remain in the possession of the applicant after the test is completed.
5. Examination instructions and grading criteria shall be provided to the ASRC Examiner for each scenario.
6. A key will be provided to the ASRC Examiner to ensure that the applicant receives prompt feedback following the test.
7. Irrespective of the applicant's score, a copy of the scoring sheets for each scenario shall be signed by the ASRC Examiner and sent to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
8. If the applicant wishes to challenge their score on the examination, they may submit a request in writing to the ASRC Credentialing Board. The ASRC Credentialing Board review shall be limited to: rescoring the exam and verifying the validity of the scenario and relevant subcomponents which the applicant has specifically challenged.
 - 8.1. If a scenario is determined to be invalid, the applicant shall be asked to complete a replacement scenario from the same block.
 - 8.2. If a subcomponent of a scenario is determined to be invalid, the scenario shall be rescored as though that subcomponent did not exist.

9. Every examination will be accompanied by a feedback form with instructions for the applicant to discuss any issues with any aspect of the examination. These forms shall be submitted to the ASRC Credentialing Board with the applicant's scoring sheet for each scenario.

V. Recertification Process

There are two pathways for recertification, both overseen by the ASRC Credentialing Board, and applicants may select whichever path best suits their needs.

A. Recertification by Continuing Education

Eligibility

1. In order to be eligible for recertification by continuing education, the applicant must fulfil the following conditions:
 - 1.1. The applicant must hold an unexpired, ASRC-issued certification, equivalent to the level at which recertification is being requested, that expires in one year or less from the present date.
 - 1.2. The applicant must hold the required number of current Continuing Education Credits for recertification. In order to be considered current, Continuing Education Credits must have been earned since the applicant's most recent successful certification/recertification.

Process

1. The applicant must submit a recertification packet containing proof of having completed the appropriate number of Continuing Education Credits to the applicant's Group Training Officer.
2. The applicant's Group Training Officer shall review the recertification packet for completeness.
 - 2.1. In the event that the packet does not meet the necessary requirements for recertification, the GTO shall return the packet to the applicant for revision.
 - 2.2. If all requirements for recertification by continuing education are complete, the GTO will submit the recertification packet to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
3. When the ASRC Credentialing Board receives a completed recertification packet with the GTO's approval, the ASRC Credentialing Board shall review the packet, issue a decision on the applicant's recertification, and notify the applicant and GTO within 14 days.
 - 3.1. If any defects are found, the recertification packet will be returned to the appropriate level of review.
 - 3.2. Upon acceptance of the Applicant's completed Recertification Packet, the ASRC Credentialing Board shall issue a certificate to the applicant indicating that they have successfully renewed their certification.

B. Recertification by Testing

Eligibility

1. In order to be eligible for recertification by examination, an applicant must fulfil the following conditions:
 - 1.1. The applicant must hold an unexpired, ASRC-issued certification, equivalent to the level at which recertification is being requested, that expires in one year or less from the present date.
 - 1.2. The applicant must present a recertification form (found in the relevant PTB)

- 1.3. If the applicant's most recent recertification test for the current certification was not passed, the results of that examination must be submitted with the PTB. In this case, the re-examination will be targeted to area(s) in which the applicant had difficulty previously.

Process

1. The applicant will be subject to a practical exam (See section IV.C) formally administered by ASRC Examiner(s).
2. Practical exams will be comprised of material drawn from "subject matter blocks" as specified for the certification being sought.
3. Once the applicant successfully completes a subject matter block with a passing score, the ASRC Examiner shall sign-off that block. This endorsement shall be valid for 120 days
4. Once all subject matter blocks are completed and have valid endorsements, the ASRC Examiner shall process the PTB as described in section III of this document.

Recertification Practical Examination

1. A pool of testing scenarios shall be maintained for each subject matter block.
2. When an exam is requested for an applicant, 1 scenario shall be randomly selected from the pool of scenarios maintained for each block
3. Test scenarios for each subject matter block may be administered by any ASRC Examiner, including the applicant's GTO, so long as no less than 50% of scenarios are scored by an ASRC Examiner from outside the applicant's group.
4. No test materials may remain in the possession of the applicant after the test is completed.
5. Examination instructions and grading criteria shall be provided to the ASRC Examiner for each scenario.
6. The ASRC Examiner shall provide prompt feedback to the applicant about their performance following the test.
7. Irrespective of the applicant's score, a copy of the scoring sheets for each scenario shall be signed by the ASRC Examiner and sent to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
8. Every examination will be accompanied by a feedback form with instructions for the applicant to discuss any issues with any aspect of the examination. The feedback form shall be submitted to the ASRC Credentialing Board with the applicant's scoring sheets.
9. If the applicant wishes to challenge their score on the examination, they may submit a request in writing to the ASRC Credentialing Board. The ASRC Credentialing Board review shall be limited to: rescoring the exam and verifying the validity of the scenario and relevant subcomponents which the applicant has specifically challenged. Requests to challenge the score must specify why the scenario or subcomponent is invalid, or specify the defect in grading that, when corrected, would result in a passing grade.
 - 9.1. If a scenario is determined to be invalid, the applicant shall be asked to complete a replacement scenario from the same block.
 - 9.2. If a subcomponent of a scenario is determined to be invalid, the scenario shall be rescored as though that subcomponent did not exist.

VI. Certificates

A. ASRC issued Credentials

Credentials issued by the ASRC shall be accompanied by a certificate that includes the following:

- The full name of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference
- The ASRC logo
- The name of the member granted the certification
- The name of the certification granted
- Date of issued
- Date of expiration/recertification, which shall be determined according to the ASRC Training Standards
- The signature of the Conference Training Officer.
- The signature of the Group Training Officer

VII. Qualifications and Responsibilities

B. Qualified Evaluator

Responsibilities

- When an applicant wishes to apply for a certification, Qualified Evaluator(s) will review the applicant's mastery of skills defined in the ASRC Training Standards and itemized within the appropriate Position Task Book (PTB).
- When a qualified applicant has demonstrated that their level of mastery complies with the ASRC Training Standards, the Qualified Evaluator will endorse the relevant section in the applicant's PTB.
- The Qualified Evaluator will operate under the authority of, and be supervised their Group Training Officer.

Appointment & Qualifications

- Within each ASRC Group, Qualified Evaluators will be appointed by the Group Training Officer.
- Qualified Evaluators may be a member of the GTO's Group, a member of another Group, or an ASRC Member-At-Large. The GTO of a Group is considered to be a Qualified Evaluator by definition.
- The GTO is responsible for maintaining a list of current Qualified Evaluators, and for ensuring that the Qualified Evaluators are acting in accordance with the ASRC Training Standards.

C. ASRC Examiner

Responsibilities

- ASRC Examiners will operate under the authority of, and be supervised by the ASRC Credentialing Board.
- ASRC Examiners shall follow the operational policies promulgated by the ASRC Credentialing Board.
- ASRC Examiners shall complete on-going training as required by the ASRC Credentialing Board.

Application and Qualifications

- Any person may apply for ASRC Examiner status, if the following conditions are met:
 - The applicant is a member in good standing in and ASRC Certified Group or an ASRC Probationary Group.
 - The applicant has maintained an active ASRC Field Team Leader certification for a minimum of one year.
 - The applicant has completed any training required for the position, as determined by the ASRC Credentialing Board.
 - The applicant has submitted a SAR Resume to the ASRC Credentialing Board.
 - Once the requirements listed above are completed, the applicant has the approval of a majority of the ASRC Credentialing Board.
- In addition, the ASRC Credentialing Board may, with the approval of the ASRC Board of Directors, temporarily waive the restrictions listed above. Any ASRC Examiner admitted via a waiver must complete all required training in a reasonable time-frame, as determined by the ASRC Credentialing Board.

D. ASRC Credentialing Board

Responsibilities

- The ASRC Credentialing Board shall be charged with overseeing the ASRC credentialing system.
- The Chair of the ASRC Credentialing Board shall make a regular report to the ASRC Board of Directors. This report shall document all new certifications issued, and cover appropriate metrics about the performance of the credentialing system, as defined by the ASRC Board of Directors.
- The ASRC Credentialing Board may appoint individuals, who may not be members of the board to manage certain functions
- The ASRC Credentialing Board shall implement and manage a Continuing Education Credit system.
 - The ASRC Credentialing Board may choose to offer Continuing Education Credits for participation in appropriate and relevant ASRC Events (Examples: Classes offered by the ASRC at ASRC AGMs, Participation in ASRC Mock Searches)
 - The ASRC Credentialing Board may, at its discretion, permit third-party educators to offer ASRC Continuing Education Credits. Documentation for each such educator, including vetting information and acceptance criteria will be maintained by the ASRC Credentialing Board.

Nomination and Qualifications

- Each ASRC Group will nominate a representative to sit on the ASRC Credentialing Board, subject to the following restrictions:
 - The nominee must be a member of the Group in good standing.
 - The nomination shall be subject to the approval of the ASRC Board of Directors.
 - ASRC Groups may determine their own process and requirements for nomination, so long as the requirements above are met.
- The term of office for representatives on the ASRC Credentialing Board shall be 2 years, except as noted below, and shall take effect after the board meeting at the ASRC's Annual General Meeting.

- The ASRC Board of Directors or the members of the ASRC Credentialing Board may temporarily adjust term limits to ensure that approximately half of the seats on the ASRC Credentialing Board open on any given year.
- Vacancies may be filled in the following manner:
 - The Group may nominate a new representative. On approval by the ASRC Board of Directors, at the next ASRC Board Meeting, the nominee will take the seat on the ASRC Credentialing Board, and will serve the remainder of the current term.
 - In the event that the Group does not nominate a new representative, the ASRC Board of Directors will appoint one of the ASRC Representatives from that Group to the seat in question. This person will hold the seat until the end of the current term, or at whatever time the Group designates a new nominee, who is subsequently approved by the ASRC Board of Directors.

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