AFTE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

During the business meeting at the 1994 AFTE Annual Training Seminar, the membership in attendance voted in favor of having the certification committee prepare a certification plan which will be subject to a vote at the 1995 AFTE Annual Training Seminar in San Diego. This questionnaire is the final opportunity for each of you to provide your input into the formulation of that plan. Please answer the questions and return the forms to me by January 30, 1995. Do not hesitate to include any comments you might have on issues that you believe need to be addressed that we may have overlooked.

For those of you who did not attend the business meeting in Indianapolis, and therefore did not hear the certification committee’s report or the ensuing discussion, I would add the following points of information:

1. The current certification committee was organized in 1993 to monitor efforts of organizations other than AFTE to certify Firearm & Toolmark examiners.

2. Information developed by the certification committee during 1993 and presented to the AFTE Board of Directors for their meeting in October, 1993, led the Board to change the certification committee’s objectives.

3. This information was that the California Association of Criminalists was well on their way in the development of a certification program for Firearm & Toolmark examiners. Their Firearm & Toolmark peer group had written job descriptions, prepared task analysis definitions, developed knowledge, skills and aptitude requirements, rated them as to frequency of use and importance, and prepared a requisite bibliography for the field. In fact, they were only waiting for the final okay from their Board of Directors to begin formulating questions for the examination. I understand that this approval has since been given and they are currently writing questions. In addition, we developed information that both the American Board of Criminalists and the Southern Association of Forensic Scientists intended to develop certification programs for Firearm & Toolmark examiners if AFTE did not.

4. The new objective of the certification committee as of October 5, 1993, was to prepare a certification plan for AFTE.

5. An outline of a prototype certification program was presented to AFTE members at the business meeting in Indianapolis on June 6th. The most pertinent features of which are as follows:

   a) A new membership designation - CERTIFIED - would be established that would co-exist with current membership levels. Application for this designation would be completely voluntary.

   b) Minimum qualifications for this designation would be something on the order of five years as a regular member with a college degree, or, eight years work experience as a full-time examiner with at least seven years as a regular member of AFTE without a college degree.

   c) Certified status would be granted upon successful completion of a written and practical exam to be administered at the annual training seminar. Test results would be pass/fail only. No information regarding testing would be released without a signed waiver from the applicant.

   d) Costs would be the responsibility of the applicant and would be in the $200 to $500 range.

   e) Certified members would have to provide proof of proficiency on an annual basis by either successful completion of a practical exam such as those supplied by Collaborative Testing Services, or by submission of cases for review.

6. A motion was made to authorize the certification committee to finalize a certification plan and submit it to the members at the next business meeting in San Diego in 1995. This motion was discussed, voted on and approved.
That should bring everyone up to date and offer some rationale for this final survey. However, I believe a few comments are in order.

Certification has always been an emotional issue. Whether or not AFTE has a certification program is not the issue here. That will be decided by your vote in San Diego. The issues to be decided here are how you would want the program run if we had such a program.

Finally, I would remind everyone that the ultimate goal of certification programs is the protection of the public welfare. They were never intended nor are they designed to benefit the practitioners of that profession. They should insure that successful candidates meet minimum standards as defined by that profession.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth F. Kowalski, Chairman
Certification Committee
MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Should AFTE allow non-members to apply for certification?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) ____________________________

2. At what level of membership should a member of AFTE be eligible for certification?
   a) Candidate  
   b) Provisional  
   c) Regular  
   d) Distinguished  
   e) Emeritus  
   f) ____________________________

3. Should there be an educational requirement for certification?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) ____________________________

4. Should there be a work experience requirement for certification?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) ____________________________

5. Should there be a combination of these requirements to qualify for certification?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) ____________________________

6. What should that combination be?
   a) Status and education  
   b) Status and work experience  
   c) Status and education and work experience  
   d) Education and work experience

7. What should the educational requirement be?
   a) GED  
   b) High School Diploma  
   c) BA  
   d) BS  
   e) MS  
   f) ____________________________

8. What should the work experience requirement be?
   a) 1 Year  
   b) 2 Years  
   c) 3 Years  
   d) 4 Years  
   e) 5 Years  
   f) ____________________________

9. Should years of education be counted toward years of work experience?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) ____________________________
10. How would you compute the equivalence?
   a) BS = 1 Year  e) MS = 2 Years  i) PhD = 3 Years
   b) BS = 2 Years  f) MS = 3 Years  j) PhD = 4 Years
   c) BS = 3 Years  g) MS = 4 Years  k) PhD = 5 Years
   d) BS = _____  h) MS = _____  l) PhD = _____

11. Should managers or non-benchwork members be eligible for certification?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) __________________________

12. Should examiners who work less than 100% in Firearms & Toolmarks be eligible for certification?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) __________________________

13. What percentage of time should an examiner spend on benchwork to be eligible for certification?
   a) 0  d) 41-60  g) ______
   b) 1-20  c) 61-80  
   c) 21-40  f) 81-100  

14. How should bench time equate to years of experience?
   a) 1-20% _____ 1. 1 year
   b) 21-40% _____ 2. 0.75 Years
   c) 41-60% _____ 3. 0.5 Years
   d) 61-80% _____ 4. 0.25 Years
   e) 81-100% _____ 5. 0 Years

15. How should work experience be computed?
   a) Years in field
   b) Time on bench
   c) Number of cases worked
   d) Number of times testified
   e) __________________________

16. If criteria other than "years in field" or "time on bench" is used, what should be the method of computation?
   a) _____ cases = 1 Year
   b) _____ items = 1 Case
   c) _____ courts = 1 Year
   d) __________________________

GRANDFATHERING

1. Should anyone be "grandfathered" into certification?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) __________________________

2. What should be the requirements for "grandfathering"?
   a) Membership level  d) All of the above  g) ______
   b) Work experience  e) Special nomination
   c) Education  f) Combinations of above

3. What membership level should be eligible for "grandfathering"?
   a) Regular
   b) Distinguished
   c) Emeritus
   d) ______
4. How much work experience should be required for “grandfathering”?
   a) 10 Years
   b) 15 Years
   c) 20 Years
   d) 25 Years
   e) __________

5. How much education should be required for “grandfathering”?
   a) BS
   b) MS
   c) PhD
   d) __________

6. Who would determine “grandfathering” issues?
   a) The AFTE Board of Directors
   b) The AFTE Certification Committee
   c) A special “Grandfather” Committee
   d) The general membership of AFTE
   e) __________

7. Should certification costs be altered for “grandfathered” members?
   a) None
   b) 25%
   c) 50%
   d) 75%
   e) 100%
   f) __________

TESTING

1. Should there be a test?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) __________

2. What type of test should be given?
   a) Written only
   b) Practical only
   c) Written & practical
   d) Oral only
   e) Oral & practical
   f) Written or oral & practical
   g) __________

3. Should tests be monitored?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) __________

4. Who should administer the test?
   a) AFTE Board of Directors
   b) AFTE Certification Committee
   c) Special AFTE test committee
   d) An independent testing agency
   e) __________

5. What type of written test should be given?
   a) Open book
   b) Closed book
   c) __________

6. What form of written questions should be used?
   a) Multiple choice
   b) True/False
   c) Essay
   d) a & b
   e) a, b & c
   f) __________
7. What degree of knowledge should be tested?
   a) Basic
   b) Extensive
   c) Esoteric
   d) Only that associated with normal casework
   e) __________________________

8. Should tests be timed?
   a) Yes          b) No          c) __________________________

9. Should time limitations be different for written and practical examinations?
   a) Yes          b) No          c) __________________________

10. What time constraints should be used?
    a) 1-4 Hours
    b) 4-8 Hours
    c) 1-2 Days
    d) 1 Week
    c) __________________________

11. Who should decide issues of time limitations?
    a) Authors of the test
    b) AFTE Board of Directors
    c) AFTE Certification Committee
    d) Special test committee
    e) __________________________

12. Should the tests be divided into sections, i.e. Firearms = 1 section, Toolmarks = 1 section, Gunshot Residues = 1 section, etc.?
    a) Yes          b) No          c) __________________________

13. Who should prepare the tests?
    a) AFTE Board of Directors
    b) AFTE Certification Committee
    c) Special test committee
    d) Independent agency
    e) __________________________

14. Who should grade the tests?
    a) AFTE Board of Directors
    b) AFTE Certification Committee
    c) Special test committee
    d) Independent agency
    e) __________________________

15. Where should tests be given?
    a) AFTE Annual Training Seminar
    b) Any regional forensic meeting
    c) Candidate's laboratory or workplace
    d) Specially designated regional locations
    e) __________________________

16. How often should tests be given?
    a) Once a year
    b) Twice a year
    c) Whenever requested
    d) __________________________
17. Who should provide equipment and materials needed for exam?
   a) AFTE
   b) Candidate
   c) Specially designated “host” laboratories
   d) ________________________________

18. How often should a candidate be eligible to take the exam?
   a) Once per year
   b) As often as he wants
   c) Whenever it’s given
   d) ________________________________

19. Should tests include case and testimony review?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ________________________________

20. How should tests be graded?
   a) Numerically
   b) Letter grade
   c) Pass/Fail
   d) ________________________________

21. What should constitute a failing grade?
   a) Decision of test makers
   b) Decision of AFTE Board of Directors
   c) Decision of AFTE Certification Committee
   d) 50%
   e) 60%
   f) ________________________________

22. Should special considerations be given to testing international members?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ________________________________

COSTS

1. Who should pay for the costs of certification?
   a) AFTE
   b) Candidate
   c) ________________________________

2. What should the maximum cost be to a candidate?
   a) 100
   b) 200
   c) 300
   d) 400
   e) 500
   f) ________________________________

3. Should AFTE purchase equipment necessary to administer the exams?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ________________________________

4. Should the certification program be self-sufficient, i.e., charge enough to cover costs incurred?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ________________________________

5. Who should pay any travel costs associated with administering the certification program?
   a) AFTE
   b) Candidate
   c) ________________________________

6. Should the certification program generate any surplus?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ________________________________

7. What should be done with the surplus?
   a) General fund
   b) Scholarship fund
   c) Rebate to candidates
   d) ________________________________
RECERTIFICATION

1. Should there be a recertification process on some periodic basis?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ____________________

2. What should that time frame be?
   a) 1 Year  d) 4 Years
   b) 2 years  e) 5 Years
   c) 3 Years  f) ______

3. Should recertification consist of:
   a) written exam?  f) a, b & c?
   b) practical exam?  g) case & testimony review?
   c) oral exam?  h) proof of continuing education?
   d) a & b?  i) all of above?
   e) b & c?  j) ____________________

4. Should annual proficiency tests such as those supplied by Collaborative Testing Services be sufficient for recertification?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ____________________

5. What should constitute acceptable continuing education?
   a) AFTE seminars  c) Courses from accredited educational institutions
   b) Regional forensic meetings  f) All of the above
   c) Manufacturer’s schools  g) ____________________
   d) Manufacturer’s tours

6. Who should pay the costs of recertification?
   a) AFTE  b) Candidate  c) ____________________

7. What should be the maximum cost of recertification?
   a) 100  d) 400
   b) 200  e) 500
   c) 300  f) ____________________

8. Where should recertification take place?
   a) AFTE Annual Training Seminar
   b) Candidate’s laboratory or workplace
   c) Regional meetings
   d) Designated regional “host” laboratories
   e) ____________________

9. Who should pay any travel costs associated with recertification?
   a) AFTE  b) Candidate  c) ____________________

GENERAL

1. Should certification by other organizations be recognized by AFTE?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ____________________

2. Should partial certifications be conferred or available, i.e., certified in firearms only or certified in toolmarks only?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ____________________

3. If the certification process takes place at the candidate’s laboratory or workplace, is a site survey necessary?
   a) Yes  b) No  c) ____________________
4. Should certified status be revokable?
   a) Yes       b) No       c) ___________________________

5. What would constitute a revokable offense?
   a) Mistakes  
   b) Misconduct
   c) Ethical violation
   d) All of the above
   e) ___________________________

6. Do you intend to apply for certification?
   a) Yes       b) No       c) ___________________________

7. Can you foresee a situation in which you might apply for certification?
   a) Yes       b) No       c) ___________________________

8. What might that situation be?
   a) Court-mandated certification  
   b) Laboratory-mandated certification
   c) Peer pressure
   d) Self-satisfaction
   e) Hell freezes over
   f) ___________________________