

## **Certification Committee**

### **Mission**

- To progress in a way that is consistent with the collective vision of the AFTE Board of Directors.
- To administer the primary certification program.
  - Work with independent firms to administer online written certification tests.
  - Administer practical certification tests.
- To administer the recertification program.

### **History**

- [See AFTE article by K. Kowalski \(Fall 2000, Vol 32, No. 4, pages 373-379\)](#)

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

Note: The items listed below are mostly related to the duties/responsibilities of the Chairperson with the assistance of other committee members as needed.

#### A. General

1. Maintain working relationship with the AFTE Board of Directors.
2. Read and maintain familiarity with:
  - a. [CPS Report](#) - March 2000
  - b. [Kowalski's Executive Summary](#)
  - c. [1994 Member Survey](#)
  - d. [AFTE Certification Policies](#)
3. Maintain all records, forms, and documents pertaining to the program.
4. Cooperative Personnel Services (currently known as CPS HR Consulting, or simply "CPS").
  - a. Maintains original written examination forms, answer keys, reserve question "bank", and other documents pertaining to the creation and validation of the certification examinations.
5. National Forensic Science Technology Center (NFSTC).
  - a. Runs online portal for taking written examinations.

#### B. Receive and Review Applications for Written Certification Examinations

1. Check applicant's qualifications against applicant requirements.
2. Check proctor's qualifications against proctor requirements.
3. Communicate with AFTE Treasurer as needed regarding applicant's payment of fees.
4. Check to ensure that all required documents have been submitted and meet the requirements.
5. Approve or deny application and notify applicant.

#### C. Work with NFSTC to Administer Online Written Certification Examinations

1. In fall or winter of each year, determine the number and schedule of examination offerings (“open seasons”) for the following year and notify NFSTC.
  - a. There are typically three to four open seasons per year.
  - b. Each open season is two weeks long.
  - c. The application period deadline for each open season should be set for approximately one week before the start of the open season.
2. Provide a final list of examination candidates to NFSTC at close of application period.
  - a. NFSTC will send back a username and password for each candidate.
3. Send applicant their username for accessing the NFSTC online examination portal.
4. Send the proctor their password for accessing the NFSTC online examination portal, along with the following documents:
  - a. Instructions for proctor.
    - i. Sometime prior to test day, the proctor should run a System Check on the computer to be used for the examination according to the provided instructions. Items flagged as “not passed” should be resolved.
  - b. Instructions for candidate.
5. After close of open season, receive scored examinations from NFSTC and review each for accuracy.
  - a. Determine “Pass” or “Fail” result based on a minimum 70% passing score.
  - b. Record “Pass” or “Fail” result for each candidate and send copy of scored examinations to CPS for statistical tracking purposes.
  - c. Destroy/delete original scored examinations.
  - d. Review Comment Forms, if completed by candidate.
6. Notify each candidate of their written examination result.
  - a. Notification may be made by email, but candidate should also receive result letter.
  - b. Result letter may be prepared and/or sent by Certification Chair or CPS.
  - c. For those who fail, wait until the 30-day appeal period has passed before recording the failure. If an appeal is filed within thirty days of results of notification, initiate the appeal process.

#### D. Receive and Review Applications for Practical Certification Examinations

1. Check to ensure applicant has previously taken and passed written certification examination(s) in same subject area(s) as practical examination(s) being applied for.
  - a. Remember that there is no limit on the amount of time that can elapse between successfully completing the written examination and applying to take the practical examination.
2. Check to ensure applicant has paid all fees.

3. Check proctor's qualifications against proctor requirements, if a different proctor is being used than the one who oversaw the written testing or if a significant amount of time has passed between the written examination and the practical examination.

E. Work with Proctor and Committee Custodian to Administer Practical Certification Examinations

1. Notify custodian of practical examinations (another Committee member) of need to send examination kit(s) to proctor at earliest convenience, depending on availability.
2. Maintain and send electronic files of the following forms to proctor for use in administering examination:
  - a. Specific test instructions and worksheet.
    - i. Six of these are used; one for each part of each of the three examinations.
  - b. Instructions to proctor.
  - c. Applicant security agreements.
  - d. Proctor security agreements.
  - e. Proctor's Report form.
  - f. List of materials needed to perform these tests.
  - g. Retention of record policy .
  - h. Appeal process outline.
    - i. Return address for sending the kit back to custodian upon completion.
3. The Applicant and Proctor Security Agreements should be completed and returned to the Chair; the test instructions, worksheet, and Proctor's Report may be returned with the kit when it is sent back to the custodian.
4. Coordinate shipping dates with custodian to ensure that proctor receives the examination kit(s) in time to administer test(s) as scheduled.
5. Custodian will package and ship examination kit(s) via Fed Ex to proctor. Mark package "To be opened by *Name of Proctor* only" and place the following on the comment line: "AFTE Certification Test – *Applicant's Name*."
6. Custodian will receive returned examination kit(s) and note on shipping label when received and if sealed, how sealed.
7. Custodian will open returned examination kit(s); check results against answer key.
8. Have the results witnessed by one other person (2 witnesses total) and record the end result ("Pass" or "Fail" only). Witnessing can be done via telephone.
9. Chair will notify candidate of results by telephone (if possible) and email.
10. If a candidate failed, retain all test materials until after the appeal period. If an appeal is filed within thirty days of notification of results, initiate the appeal process.
11. If candidate passed examination, or if they failed and it is past the appeal period, destroy all of candidates examination documents.
12. Custodian will examine practical test materials that are to be reused to ensure that no marking/damage has occurred.

13. Restock practical test materials for reuse.
14. Issue certification certificate upon successful completion of practical examination (see H. below).

F. Administer Recertification Program

1. Send reminder notifications to certificants approaching their recertification deadlines. The AFTE Secretary may assist with this.
2. Receive and review applications for recertification.
  - a. Check activities listed on application to ensure they comply with approved types of activities in Recertification Point Schedule.
    - i. May sometimes need to request additional information from applicant to evaluate this.
  - b. Check to ensure applicant has submitted sufficient supporting documentation for each activity listed on application.
  - c. Check to ensure proper proficiency tests have been documented on application.
  - d. Check to ensure applicant has paid all fees.
  - e. Notify applicant of recertification eligibility.
  - f. Issue recertification certificate upon successful completion of the recertification process (see H. below).
3. Monitor annual proficiency testing requirement.
  - a. Send annual reminder notifications (around January 1<sup>st</sup>) that Proficiency Testing Status Reporting forms are due by June 30.
  - b. Receive and review Proficiency Testing Status Reporting forms.
    - i. Send additional reminder notification as deadline approaches.

G. Prepare and Issue Certificates for Certification and Recertification

1. Original certification certificates
  - a. Use electronic template to print certificates on ivory-colored, 24 lb., linen business paper (remember to check spelling of recipient's name).
  - b. The Certification Chair signs and dates the certificates in BLUE ink.
  - c. The certificates must then be mailed to the AFTE President with instructions to sign in BLUE ink before mailing them back to Chair.
  - d. Gold seals are embossed with AFTE logo using embossing press.
  - e. A 2-inch long piece of ribbon is cut and shaped according to template.
  - f. Gold seals and ribbons are arranged and affixed to bottom center of certificates.
  - g. Completed certificates are placed in presentation covers and then into heavyweight (preferably cardboard) 11" x 14" photo mailers.
  - h. Certificates are mailed to recipients.
2. Recertification certificates
  - a. Use electronic template to print certificates on ivory-colored, 24 lb., linen business paper (remember to check spelling of recipient's name).
  - b. The Certification Chair signs and dates certificates in BLUE ink.
  - c. Completed certificates are placed in 9" x 12" manila mailing envelopes with cardstock to inhibit bending.

- d. Certificates are mailed to recipients.
- H. Prepare a Mid-Year Report for the AFTE Board of Directors
1. Distribute report to Certification Committee members and AFTE 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.
    - a. It is useful to keep an ongoing record of committee activities; makes assembly of mid-year/annual report much easier.
- I. Prepare an Annual Report for the AFTE Board of Directors
1. These reports will chronicle all committee activities during the year.
  2. Distribute report to Certification Committee members and AFTE 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.
  3. Present report at the annual AFTE business meeting.
- J. Update/Modify Certification Policies and this “Duties and Responsibilities” Document as Required
- K. Expenses
1. Stationery supplies for creating certificates.
  2. Postage and mailing costs (USPS and FedEx).
  3. Online test enrollment fees to NFSTC - \$100.00/test.
  4. Evaluation fees to CPS as needed.
  5. Creating new written/practical tests when needed.
  6. Portable lockable file cabinets for certification records.
  7. At least two lockable storage cabinets 6 feet high x 3 feet wide x 2-2 ½ feet deep for practical test materials.
- L. Communicate with AFTE Treasurer
1. Send checks, warrants, etc. to AFTE Treasurer. Retain a copy for the Certification Committee’s records. Communicate regarding status of PayPal payments.
  2. Treasurer will keep a running total of monies received and committee expenditures.
- M. Communicate with AFTE Webmaster and Secretary
1. Notify Webmaster and Secretary when certificants are added, recertified, or dropped from the program so they may update the list of certified members on the website and any other tracking records.
  2. Notify Webmaster of open season dates and application deadlines for online written examinations. These dates should be posted on the AFTE website homepage at least 30 days prior to the first application deadline in each calendar year.
  3. Notify Webmaster of any desired changes in content of Certification Program webpages.
- N. Address Inquiries from Interested Parties and Stakeholders

1. AFTE Board of Directors.
2. AFTE members and non-members interested in becoming certified.
3. Prosecutors and defense attorneys inquiring about certification status of members.
  - a. The records of the Certification Committee are considered confidential and will be securely maintained by the Committee Chair. A member's certification standing is not considered information, as defined by AFTE Policy # 14, and is therefore not subject to release during a membership inquiry. However, AFTE may be compelled to release the details of a member's certification status to an attorney if the Association is served with a valid subpoena or court order.

**Past Chairs of the Certification Committee**

Kenneth Kowalski	1995-1997
Kenneth Kowalski & John Murdock	1997-1999
John Murdock	1999-2002
Jerry Miller	2002-2007
Mike Neel	2007-2008
Robert Thompson	2008-2013
Eric Collins	2013-2017