

**International Fire Service Accreditation Congress**

**Certificate Assembly**

**Criteria for Certificate  
Accreditation  
with  
Basis for Judgment  
Statements**

**Prepared  
by the  
IFSAC Certificate Assembly  
Committee on Site Teams**

# Table of Contents

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION .....	2
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF WRITTEN & SKILLS TESTING .....	7
WRITTEN TEST BANKS.....	9
WRITTEN/SKILLS TEST GRADING .....	10
TEST SECURITY .....	11
TEST PROCTORS/EVALUATORS.....	11
WRITTEN TESTS.....	13
SKILLS TESTS .....	13

**These criteria are the minimum requirements to obtain accreditation. Any exceptions to these criteria must be demonstrated by the entity to the satisfaction of the site team and the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors.**

## **International Fire Service Accreditation Congress Criteria for Certificate Accreditation**

**Scope:** These criteria shall apply to the accreditation of entities engaged in providing public and private fire service professional certification.

**Purpose:** The following criteria are designed for application by the Certificate Assembly in accrediting entities that make application for said certificate accreditation. The Certificate Assembly Board of Governors will utilize information provided by the applicants and gathered by site visit teams in determining compliance with these criteria.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Explanatory statement(s) which amplify the criteria for accreditation or which provide examples of how the requirements may be interpreted to allow for flexibility, yet remain within the framework of the criteria.

## **CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

1. The certifying entity shall have in place a written mission statement supported by various goals.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available documents stating the entity's mission statement and identifying the certifying entity's objectives shall be made available. Evidence relating to this criterion would typically be contained in the entity's documentation.

2. The certifying entity shall have available a listing of the job performance requirements and the requisites required for the various certification levels accredited, upon request by the applicant.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available documents stating the entity's job performance requirements and identifying the certifying entity's requisites shall be made available. Evidence relating to this criterion would typically be contained in the entity's documentation.

3. The certifying entity shall provide facilities and equipment that ensure the health and safety of participants.

- A. The certifying entity shall provide documentation indicating that testing sites provide adequate space for written and manipulative skills testing.
- B. The certifying entity shall provide documentation indicating that the entity meets or exceeds applicable NFPA safety and health standards or their equivalents.
- C. The certifying entity shall provide documentation indicating that personal protective equipment, apparatus, and equipment meet or exceed applicable NFPA standards or their equivalent.
- D. The certifying entity shall provide any documentation where noncompliance with applicable statutes and/or other state, provincial, federal, or local regulations has occurred.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT (A-D):** The entity may choose from the following non-inclusive list of examples including inspection reports, maintenance records, letters of compliance, photos of sites, list(s) of testing requirements, or similar documentation. The certifying entity should address, at a minimum, any occurrences of noncompliance with the following:

- A. Bylaws and operational policies
- B. Compliance with state/provincial/territorial statutes, regulations, and federally mandated standards, such as those issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA)
- C. Equal Employment Opportunities Act

- D. Affirmative action policies
- E. American with Disability Act
- F. Age Discrimination Employment Act

(added wording from NFPA 1000, A.5.2.1 appendix)

4. Certifying entities shall establish policies and procedures to prevent undue or inappropriate influence over the certification system by any individual, entity, or interest group.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The certifying entity should have the ability to operate independently of undue or inappropriate political or economic influences either within or outside the organization that sponsors the certifying activity. The certifying entity should not be obligated to, nor should its decisions on particular certification levels be reviewed by any other body having political or economic goals that could conflict with the certification goals of accreditation.

5. Accredited entities shall have a written policy that addresses the impact of accreditation.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The policy shall affirm that accreditation shall not affect the current certification status of any individual.

6. Accredited entities shall have a written policy that specifies how persons previously certified or holding a position will be allowed to participate in the certification system. The policy shall address this matter in one of the following ways: (Explain your process)

- A. Personnel shall be granted an equivalent certification upon request;
- B. Personnel shall be examined to determine if they meet the certification requirements.
- C. Personnel shall be allowed to enter into a particular entity's next level of IFSAC accredited certification if they have a recognized state, provincial, or agency prerequisite certification level.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy with a scope limited to individuals within the entity's current certification system. Reciprocity is dealt with elsewhere.

7. Any entity seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation shall certify personnel to the current edition of standards adopted by the Assembly, or the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors. Accredited entities may continue to certify to previous editions of the recognized standard (including alternative standards) for a period of three (3) calendar years from the official date of adoption of the newest version. If the site visit occurs during the time that an organization is using a previously recognized standard, a recommendation for accreditation shall be contingent upon compliance with the three-year rule.

8. An accredited entity shall make all testing and certifying services available to all fire service personnel meeting published prerequisites. The entity shall make all testing and certifying services available to all of its constituents without regard to race, sex, or ethnic origin.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing nondiscrimination. For any limitations to this criterion, the entity shall show evidence of a legal act, legislation, resolution, or statute from a state, provincial, territorial, or federal government agency or body authorizing the limitation.

9. The certification system shall include a methodology for scheduling and administering testing to the preponderance of the constituency.
  - A. Accredited entities shall establish and publish the prerequisites required to take examinations at the various certification levels.
  - B. Accredited entities shall publish information that specifies (if required) a prescribed course of study prior to candidate taking certification exams. Explain the prerequisites for taking certification exams.
  - C. Written material regarding written and skills test descriptions, preparation, types of questions used in the written test, study references, and skills test criteria shall be accessible to the candidate.
  - D. The organization seeking accreditation shall have a distribution plan relating to this item.
  - E. Accredited entities shall provide the date, time, and location of any testing process upon receipt of a request for such information from IFSAC Administration. Explain your procedures for scheduling of testing. Include your methods of approving site selection, safety, timing, proctoring, and adequacy of facilities.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion. Demonstrate compliance with this policy.

10. Accredited entities shall permit a representative designated by the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors to observe any testing process upon receiving notice of intent to observe the test at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the test. The certifying entity shall provide the dates, time, and location of any testing process upon request for such information from IFSAC Administration.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion.

11. An accredited entity may delegate any or all of its certifying authority for accredited levels only after informing IFSAC Administration and under the following circumstances:
  - A. The delegated certification authority shall be conducted under the same procedures, criteria, and standards as those used by the accredited entity. (*For variations see (D).*)

- B. The accredited entity delegating its authority shall be responsible for compliance with accreditation criteria.
- C. An accredited entity shall not delegate its certifying authority to another entity that has a broader geographical service area in terms of constituency.
- D. All materials for delegated levels shall be made available for site team review to ensure compliance with the accreditation criteria, or if the delegated entity uses a different set of criteria from the accredited entity, the accredited entity shall ensure a separate application is submitted to IFSAC. A separate site visit, along with appropriate fees, may be necessary as determined by Administration (in concurrence with the Board Chair and the chair of the Committee on Site Teams).

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion. If any delegation is to occur, full details shall be submitted during the application and self-study process. Include recipients of delegation and manner in which compliance with accreditation criteria will be controlled by your entity.

- 12. An entity may delegate any or all of its certification authority for non-accredited levels to another accredited entity with the approval of Administration, in concurrence with the Chair of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors, and the Chair of the Committee on Site Teams.
  - A. Administration must ensure that the empowered entity has approved the delegation, and that the accredited entity receiving the delegation has sufficient resources and can continue to follow their accredited Certificate Assembly procedures in the new geographical area(s).
  - B. Certificates and seals will be issued under the delegated authority's name.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion. For example, Entity A requests Entity B to enter Entity A's jurisdiction to certify individuals for a level that Entity A is not accredited. Certificates will be issued under the delegated authority's name. If Entity A later gains accreditation for that level, reciprocity may be granted. Delegation occurs whether the testing is a one-time or a multiple event.

- 13. Accredited entities shall collect the following data and report it to IFSAC Administration at least annually based on the entity's billing cycle:
  - A. Names of candidates tested
  - B. Name/Birthday Identifier (See note below)
  - C. Certification level records
  - D. IFSAC seal number
  - E. Date of Certification

**Note: International Registry Tracking Identifier**

For all seals issued to individuals beginning July 1, 2006, entities must report the seal as follows. The tracking identifier must include the:

- A. First letter of the individual's first name
- B. First four letters of the individual's last name
- C. Individual's birth date in the following format MMDDYYYY

Example - For an individual named Paul Smith with birthday of March 2, 1975, the identifier would be entered as "psmit03021975".

If the individual's last name has less than four letters the following applies:

- A. First letter of the individual's first name
- B. All letters of the last name – for 3rd and/or 4th characters use the letter "o" (Not zero)
- C. Individual's birth date in the following format MMDDYYYY

Example 1 – For an individual with two letters in the last name (i.e. Tim Ha) and a birthday of June 25, 1975, the identifier would be entered as "thao06251975".

Example 2 – For an individual with three letters in the last name (i.e. Robert Poe) and a birthday of June 28, 1975, the identifier would be entered as "rpoe06281975".

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion. Demonstration of compliance will be verified by IFSAC Administration.

**Note:** The Committee feels that items 13 should be reviewed during the application process by Administration in the same way that financial records and staffing records are reviewed. This will maintain consistency in the process.

- 14. Accredited entities shall make test items available to site teams and administrative reviewers. Test items shall be reviewed in a secure setting, and shall not be copied by site team members or administrative reviewers in any way.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** During the site visit the site team should be provided a private work area (e.g., conference room) where the setting is inaccessible to unauthorized personnel.

- 15. Accredited entities shall have a written procedure to allow participants in their certification system to appeal certification decisions. Explain from beginning to end your appeal process.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion.

16. An accredited entity shall agree to review the certification credentials of individuals certified by other IFSAC accredited entities to determine which level of certification, if any, is applicable (Reciprocity). Describe the conditions under which certification would be granted to individuals certified by other IFSAC accredited entities.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion.

17. The certifying entity shall provide currency and recertification policies that address, at a minimum, the following:
  - A. a period of time for which certification is valid;
  - B. procedures that address lapse of certification;
  - C. continuing education process - i.e., progression to next level of completion; and
  - D. if time-limited certification, establishing recertification requirements and criteria, procedures, and administrative responsibilities.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion.

### **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF WRITTEN & SKILLS TESTING**

The entity shall establish and utilize examination procedures that are valid. Examinations shall measure the performance of personnel consistent with the standards adopted by IFSAC to include the following:

1. Accredited entities shall offer examinations for any level for which certification is offered. Examinations shall be subject to the following conditions:
  - A. JPRs, requisite knowledge and skills (to the extent possible) shall be examined through a process of objectively assessed examinations/tests.
  - B. JPRs and requisite knowledge may be examined/tested through written or skills examinations/tests.
  - C. JPRs involving skills and requisite skills shall be examined/tested through manipulative skills examinations/tests.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion. The intent of this section is that an entity may test the JPRs and requisite knowledge areas of a specific level through written and skills testing or skills testing alone.

The entity is responsible to demonstrate to the site team that they meet the intent of the standard.

2. Correlation sheets in the IFSAC format must be prepared.
  - A. A correlation sheet in the IFSAC format (provided by Administration) shall be prepared by the entity for every level of accreditation being sought.
    1. As a minimum, each applicable component listed in the JPRs, requisite knowledge and skill shall have at least one associated test item. A test item (written or skill) may support more than one component, when relevant.
    2. Each component listed under JPRs and requisite knowledge shall be covered by either a written item or skill sheet.
    3. Each component listed under JPRs requisite skills shall be included in the skills sheet associated with that element. The skill sheet shall be listed in the block titled "Skill Sheet #".
    4. For those standards that are not in the JPR format (e.g. NFPA 472, 473, 1521, Alternative Standards), it is incumbent upon the entity to demonstrate that they are meeting the intent of the standard.
  - B. In the testing of requisite knowledge and skills, an entity may choose one of the following:
    1. Test requisite knowledge and skills as a pre-test prior to testing the job performance requirements for the level being tested.
    2. Test the requisite knowledge and skills within the job performance requirement.
    3. Test the job performance requirements provided there is reasonable assurance that a lack of requisite knowledge and skills would cause a failure by the candidate.
3. If an entity is using a written test bank to test requisite knowledge, the entity shall have no less than one test question to support each component within the requisite knowledge. A test item may support more than one component, when relevant.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** It is recommended that more than one question per component be used to increase the size of the test bank, however, more than one question is not required. If written tests are not used to test this knowledge, the entity shall demonstrate how the skill testing incorporates the requirements of requisite knowledge.

4. The entity has the option to use a portfolio to show proficiency in the requisite knowledge and skills.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** It is the entity's responsibility to demonstrate that their portfolio process meets the intent of the standard. Each component of the requisite skills and the intent of the JPR shall be addressed.

5. Entities shall ensure that the pre-requisite and/or co-requisite levels are successfully completed in conjunction with the level of certification itself to demonstrate participant competency.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Examples

- A. To certify as Firefighter I, the appropriate NFPA 472 hazardous materials level shall be successfully completed.
  - B. To certify to Fire Investigator, the appropriate line items of NFPA 472 may be incorporated into the test bank covering NFPA 1033, rather than having to evaluate or certify to the entire NFPA 472 standard.
6. The entity shall be prepared to test all the JPRs and components of requisite knowledge and skills in the given standard. The actual testing process shall demonstrate that:
    - A. All JPRs and components of requisite knowledge and skills are tested, or
    - B. A random selection of JPRs and components of requisite knowledge and skills are examined (this random selection shall be made from the items covering the entire standard).

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Confirm through the Correlation Sheets.

### **WRITTEN TEST BANKS**

1. Entities shall maintain a test item bank or other recognized means of evaluation for all accredited levels of certification testing.
  - A. Test banks shall include sufficient questions to correlate to 100% of the applicable requisite knowledge requirements set for the certification level.
  - B. Test banks shall be at least twice as large as the number of questions used per test generated.
  - C. A separate test bank shall be maintained for each level of certification.
  - D. The standard and edition being tested are identified.
  - E. The test bank shall test the same standard and edition as the accredited level.
  - F. Each item shall include a reference to the standard being measured and to a reference source.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Verify test banks to ensure compliance.

2. Test banks may be developed by the entity or purchased from an outside source. In either case, the following applies:

- A. Test items shall be reviewed by subject matter experts from the entity's jurisdiction.
- B. Each item shall be reviewed to ensure its applicability for use within the jurisdiction.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy documenting their review process.

- 3. Test scores and test items shall be reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, *p*rocedures for analysis and corrective action shall be outlined for special circumstances, including but not limited to situations when questions are challenged, or a validation issue arises.
  - A. The entity shall demonstrate their process for analyzing test items for validity and reliability.
  - B. The entity shall analyze and maintain test statistics including the following:
    - 1. Number of persons taking the test
    - 2. Distribution of test scores
    - 3. Average test score

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy documenting their review process. Demonstrate compliance with this policy.

### **WRITTEN/SKILLS TEST GRADING**

- 1. An entity shall have identified criteria for the grading of all exams (written, skills, etc.).
  - A. The scoring of exams shall be impartial.
  - B. Any parts of an exam that are weighted shall be identified and explained.
  - C. Knowledge examinations shall be graded with a predetermined grade level denoting the pass level (pass level shall be determined by the entity).
  - D. Skills examinations shall be graded on a pass/fail basis.

- 2. The entity shall have a means by which candidates are notified of test scores.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The entity shall provide a written policy relating to the release of test scores that adequately addresses confidentiality and privacy.

- 3. Records shall be kept on all test results (e.g., hardcopy or electronic at the entity's discretion) for a period of time which the entity deems necessary.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with jurisdictional record-keeping requirements.

4. Entities shall establish a written policy regarding re-testing candidates.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with this criterion.

### **TEST SECURITY**

1. The certifying entity shall provide documentation of an evaluation security system that prevents compromising the evaluation instrument(s) and the evaluation process.
2. The security system shall identify the following:
  - A. Restrictions limiting personnel access to the question sets, system, etc.
  - B. Secure storage of test development materials and computer disks.
  - C. Disposal/security of old exam development materials, disks, etc.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with these criteria.

### **TEST PROCTORS/EVALUATORS**

1. Accredited entities shall have written procedures that govern test proctors/evaluators.
  - A. Accredited entities shall have written criteria for the selection of test proctors/evaluators.
  - B. The guidelines issued to test proctors/evaluators for administering the test shall be clear, concise, and compatible with other procedures within the entity's policies and procedures document.
  - C. The certifying entity shall adopt and publish the minimum criteria for proctors/evaluators used in its programs. The certifying entity shall maintain a process of periodic evaluation of proctors/evaluators to assess currency of skills and knowledge levels.
  - D. The entity shall have written procedures for conducting evaluator training to include evaluation, policies and the record-keeping process.
  - E. Proctors/evaluators of skill examinations shall have adequate knowledge and skills for the subject matter.
  - F. Proctors/evaluators shall not be the same person who instructed a given prerequisite course of instruction, unless all of the following conditions are met:
    1. The accredited entity shall have approved the examination process in advance.

2. The accredited entity shall have an audit procedure in place to ensure testing session credibility.
  3. The proctor(s) shall have signed an agreement acknowledging their intention to comply with the testing procedures of the accredited entity or shall have been certified by the accrediting entity as proctor(s).
  4. The accredited entity shall have a policy establishing corrective actions for any proctor who fails to abide by the entity's testing procedures.
- G. The entity shall have a policy and/or procedure in place requiring the updating of evaluators on all policy and/or procedural changes.
- H. The certifying entity shall provide policies and procedures that ensure evaluators of manipulative skills testing perform their evaluations in an objective manner.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT (A-H):** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with these criteria.

2. Entity shall establish procedures for proctors/evaluators to ensure that the candidates understand all instructions before proceeding with the exam. Instructions shall include:
  - A. Test time limits
  - B. Proper completion of all forms and answer sheets
  - C. Materials or equipment needed for the test
  - D. Proper handling of test interruptions (i.e. broken pencils, restroom needs)
  - E. Limitations of proctor/evaluator assistance (i.e. definitions, rewording questions)
  - F. General and life safety instructions

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT (A-F):** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with these criteria.

## WRITTEN TESTS

1. If the entity uses a written test, information shall be documented for each level being accredited, *and as a minimum:*
  - A. The standard and edition being tested
  - B. The number of questions on the exam
  - C. Types of questions
2. Written tests may be generated manually or by using random question selection processes.
  - A. Manually generated tests shall represent a fair evaluation of all components of cognitive knowledge in both the JPR and requisite knowledge areas. Different forms shall be constructed with no more than 75% redundancy.
  - B. Randomly generated tests shall represent a fair evaluation of all components of cognitive knowledge in both the JPR and requisite knowledge areas.. Tests constructed using random question selection processes will be exempt from the redundancy requirement.
3. Knowledge examinations shall be graded with a predetermined passing score determined by the entity.
4. The entity shall have more than one form of the test being used for each level.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT (1-4):** The entity shall provide a written policy that complies with these criteria. In these criteria, different “forms” of a test have a different selection of test items. A “version” of a test is the same test with the same items but with the alternatives shuffled. It is the intent of this section that an entity shall have at least one form for the test and a different form for a retest.

## SKILLS TESTS

1. The entity shall be prepared to test all the skills in the given standard. The actual testing process shall demonstrate that:
  - A. All JPRs and requisite skills within the JPR are tested, or
  - B. A random selection of skills associated with the JPRs and requisite skills are examined.
    1. Any random selection process shall take into consideration the need for a diverse degree of difficulty and a diverse range of job areas.

2. Any random selection process shall also produce the possibility for a unique set of skills in each testing session.
- C. For those standards that are not in the JPR format (e.g., NFPA 472, 473, 1521, Alternative Standards), it is incumbent upon the entity to demonstrate that they are meeting the intent of the standard.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Points B(1) & B(2) apply whether the standard is in the Professional Qualification format (e.g., NFPA 1001) or Non-Professional Qualification (e.g., NFPA 472) format.

2. The entity shall demonstrate that skill evaluation scenarios ensure consistent skill evaluation by different proctors. This process shall include:
  - A. The use of individual grading sheets for each candidate
  - B. A written procedure for grading skill tests
  - C. A pretest briefing for all evaluators involved in testing to include:
    1. Review of acceptable test performance criteria
    2. Proper completion of any forms used in the evaluation
    3. Procedures for handling questions or problems that arise during testing

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** It is the responsibility of the entity to present rationale that their testing process is comprehensive enough to measure a student's skills inventory with respect to the standard in question.

3. The entity shall provide secure staging for students to ensure unevaluated students cannot observe candidates being testing. A mechanism shall be in place to ensure evaluated and unevaluated students cannot communicate with each other.

**BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** It is the responsibility of the entity to have a written policy and also demonstrate compliance with this criterion.