Coalition for
Career Development
Center

QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES *for* NATIONAL INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION BODIES

Committee on Quality Industry Certifications Coalition for Career Development Center

Alexandria, VA

March 28, 2021

COALITION FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The CCD Center is an industry-led, non-partisan, independent 501(c)(3) think tank headquartered in Alexandria, VA. Its purpose is to build a national consensus around its vision of making career readiness for all learners the first priority of American education.

The Center believes that providing all learners with high-quality career development services and technology will help ensure that they secure productive employment in their chosen career pathway as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

To achieve this vision, the CCD White Paper, *Career Readiness for All*, outlines a Five-Pillar Solutions Framework: Prioritizing Career Planning, Providing Career Advising, Emphasizing Work-based Learning, Providing High-Quality Career Development Technology, and Ensuring Accountability.

The CCD Center backstops its vision with research initiatives, education reform, and strong employer engagement, enabled by national thought leaders and subject matter experts. The Center defines high-quality standards for career-enhancing activities and identifies models and guidelines for achieving them.

See **www.ccd-center.org** for details on organization, leadership, and research agenda of the CCD Center.

COMMITTEE ON QUALITY INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

COMMITTEE CHAIR: David Wilcox, CEO, Global Skills Exchange

INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS:

Amazon – Anjali Weber – Manager, Certification Strategic Initiatives, Amazon Web Services

ASIS International – Gayle Rosnick – Director, Certification

American Welding Society (AWS) – Gary Kornaska, Executive Director and CEO

Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM, formerly APICS) – Gabriela Welch – Director of Credentialing Services

Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) – Trish Serratore – Senior Vice President

CompTIA – Kirk Smallwood – Vice President – Business Development, The Americas

ETA International – David Weaver, CSS – Research & Certification Development

Manufacturing Institute, Education and Research Partner, National Association of Manufacturers – Carolyn Lee – Executive Director

Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) – Neil Reddy – CEO

Microsoft – Liberty Munson – Director of Psychometrics

National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA) – Matt Cantrell – COO

National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) – Boyd Worsham – President

National Coalition for Certification Centers (NC3) – Roger Tadajewski – Executive Director

National Restaurant Association – Terry Erdle – COO

National Restaurant Association Education Foundation – Rob Gifford – President

National Retail Federation Foundation (NRF Foundation) – Adam Lukoskie – Vice President

Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) – Jeannine Kunz – Vice President, SME-Tooling U

NON-INDUSTRY RELATED ORGANIZATIONS:

American School Counselors Association (ASCA) – Jill Cook – Executive Director

American Student Assistance (ASA) – Jean Eddy – President and CEO

National Career Development Association (NCDA) – Sharon Givens – President

National Governors Association (NGA) – Amanda Winters – Postsecondary Programs

Skills USA – Chelle Travis – Executive Director

BACKGROUND

In its emphasis on applied and work-based learning, the CCD 2019 White Paper, *Career Readiness for All*, encourages all students to, "earn high quality, industry recognized certifications where available." Learners need to understand what career pathways that industry offers, and to what extent industry certifications can lead them to fulfilling their career choices.

In November 2020, the CCD Center formed the Committee on Quality Industry Certifications, chaired by David Wilcox, CEO of Global Skills Exchange (GSX), a prominent national authority on certifications, and former Deputy Executive Director of the federal National Skill Standards Board. The Center invited many of the nation's leading experts on industry certifications from a broad cross-section of industry sectors to serve on the Committee to develop **industry-defined** quality assurance Guidelines for industry certification bodies.

The Committee also includes key organizations involved in the nationwide dissemination of these Guidelines: to relevant state agencies (National Governors Association), the nation's career counselors (ASCA and NCDA), and leading student organizations (ASA and Skills USA).

In-demand industry-recognized certifications are growing in popularity in the U.S. They increase employability and wage prospects for students while helping companies upskill and continually reskill their workforce to enhance productivity, quality, and profitability. They have become the instrument of choice for demonstrating work-relevant experience. They can also be a stand-alone demonstration of knowledge and proficiency as well as being organized as stackable certifications building to a broader demonstration of knowledge and skills along a career path.

However, as industry-recognized credentials have proliferated in recent years, they have also been surrounded by confusion over their definition and relative value. The quality of thousands of industrial credentialing programs is uneven. Among the issues: some have value only at a local level, some do not adequately teach the skills needed for the industry they are designed for, and some related training and educational programs are not taught by qualified instructors. In addition, there needs to be greater recognition of how credentials can be utilized and aligned across multiple pathways.

Most importantly, many do not meet high quality standards. This is why the CCD Center's Committee on Quality Industry Certifications is committed to rigorous industry guidelines to help students, counselors, educators, parents and employers use certifications that are truly valuable to students and industry nationwide.

METHODOLOGY

In the broad spectrum of "credentials," the Committee on Quality Industry Certifications chose to focus exclusively on industry **"certifications,"** not on educational certificates, licenses, degrees, or badges. Certifications are associated with a mastery of a specific set of competencies and includes a standardized assessment. The competencies for each certification are developed with input from employers and are often associated with a specific job or set of job roles. Certifications are typically awarded for a limited time, after which they can be renewed.[1]

In the initial formulation of its Guidelines, the Committee on Quality Industry Certifications drew upon several authoritative sources of nationally recognized certification quality criteria, including:

Federal: 10 US Code 2015, Quality Assurance of Industry Certifications and Armed Services, "Attestation for Applications to Certification Opportunities. On-line (COOL)" Program.

International: ISO Standard 17024 (Personnel Certification).

National: Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) "Defining Features of Quality Certification and Assessment-Based Certificate Programs." National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

Industry: "Commentary on High Quality Assurance for Industry-recognized Certifications and Apprenticeships," National Network of Business & Industry Associations, June 2018.

Gubernatorial: National Governors Association/WorkCred, "Understanding Quality."

Technological change: "Digital Transformation," Thomas M. Siebel, Rosetta Books, 2019.

Professional: American Psychological Association: "The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing," Developed jointly by American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education.

Professional: Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology-Psychometric Practices.

Guidance from the national experts on the Committee greatly enhanced the accuracy and authoritativeness of the draft guidelines. The Committee also gave importance ratings to each guideline, which are reflected in the ordering of the Guidelines.

The Committee gave its final approval of the Guidelines on March 25, 2021.

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1   Definition from National Governors Association/WorkCred, "Understanding Quality."

These Guidelines are intended to supplement and enhance, not replace, quality assurance tools being used by well-established national and international accreditation bodies and leading trade associations that endorse credentials within their respective industries. All these bodies have detailed documentation requirements, often including periodic audits.

Using these Guidelines as a point of reference, the Committee researched examples of leading national certification bodies under each of the 20 industry sectors of the economy as defined by federal North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). The list of these examples is provided below following the Guidelines list.

Since there are career pathways related to each of these NAICS industry sectors, this list is an especially useful guide for students and career counselors. In selecting their prospective career pathways, students need an opportunity to identify national certification bodies from all sectors of the economy. This list will thus assist all students develop their Personalized Career and Academic plans called for in the CCD White Paper, *Career Readiness for All*.

The list of national certification bodies below is not intended to be exhaustive, but only an indicator of prominent examples, including those that are endorsed by a leading trade association within the industry sector. It is important to note that several of these bodies offer certifications that apply to more than one NAICS listing. Furthermore, many of these are certification programs that reside within much larger corporations that offer a wide range of products and services well beyond certifications.

The Committee released the final draft of its report to the Board and Advisory Council of the CCD Center on March 25, 2021, after which it completed its design work and began nationwide dissemination of the final report to career counselors, student organizations, accreditation groups, relevant state and federal agencies, and selected industry groups.

Guideline #1: The Certification governing body's programs are based on industry-accepted assessment design, development, and delivery standards, and the underlying knowledge and skills identified through industry-wide validated job task analyses, practice analysis, competency analysis or similar protocols and to the optimum extent possible.

Guideline #2: The Certification governing body must offer standardized assessment protocols based on validated standards/objectives to assure that all candidates are being assessed consistently, fairly and equitably. The body must make reasonable efforts to detect, control, document and minimize group bias.

Guideline #3: The Certification governing body provides for periodic updates of all program content by industry subject matter experts to ensure continuing relevancy with industry best practices and technological change.

Guideline #4: The Certification body publishes policies and related guidelines for continuing competence, recertification, or expiration within candidate materials, handbooks, or websites. The Certification governing body must assure that programs that may be used as a condition of employment are legally defensible and use competency standards and assessments that are fair, reliable, and valid.

CCD CENTER GUIDELINES (CONT'D)

Guideline #5: The Certification governing body's programs are recognized by employers within the target industries as an accepted and valued credential for training, recruitment, screening, hiring, retention, or advancement purposes to meet their enterprise requirements.

Guideline #6: The Certification governing body demonstrates commitment to the sustainability and long-term viability of the program to assure certificants are supported by the continued recognition and quality of the program.

Guideline #7: The Certification governing body assures that their programs are national in scope as market demands necessitate, which is defined as: 1) Programs recognized and accepted by employers nation-wide, 2) Students have access to providers nationally who are both capable of delivering relevant training or preparation and, 3) Program assessments are available nationwide.

Guideline #8: The Certification governing body strives to have programs that are endorsed, acknowledged, or accepted by nationally-recognized Industry associations or other relevant employer organizations representing a significant part of the industry, subsector or occupation.

Guideline #9: The Certification governing body assures transparency of program content and objectives, policies and practices, while assuring the appropriate level of assessment security. This transparency guideline is to assure that employers, certification candidates, education and training providers, career and employment counselors and the public have a clear basis for optimum decision making.

Guideline #10: The Certification governing body provides support and information for education and training programs, including impartial providers that may include work-based learning opportunities to facilitate the attainment of industry accepted certifications. Independence between formal learning and relevant assessments should be maintained to the best extent possible.

Guideline #11: The Certification governing body continues to establish processes, where practical, for documenting and publishing positive outcomes for certificants in the form of either career pathway development for students or higher rates of employment, wages and advancement for those entering or already in the workforce.

Guideline #12: The Certification governing body attests to the quality of their programs by documenting alignment with nationally recognized quality guidelines (listed in "Methodology" section above) when practical and appropriate.

NAICS CODE/CERTIFICATION BODY ALIGNMENT

NAICS	NAICS CATEGORIES	CERTIFICATION BODIES
11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	• Crop Production • Forestry and Logging • Agriculture and Forestry • Fishing and Hunting	• National Registry of Environmental Professionals • Society of American Foresters • National Association of Landscape Professionals
21 Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	• Oil and Gas Extraction • Mining	• American Petroleum Institute • National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators
22 Utilities	• Power generation and Supply • Natural Gas Distribution • Water, sewage, and other systems	• Electrical Generating Systems Association • Association of Boards of Certification
23 Construction	• Construction of Buildings • Specialty Trade Contractors • Heavy/Civil Engineering Construction	• American Welding Society • National Center for Construction Education and Research
31-33 Manufacturing	• Multiple Categories of Manufacturing	• American Welding Society • Manufacturing Skill Standards Council • Tooling U-Society of Manufacturing Engineers • National Institute for Metalworking Skills • National Coalition of Certification Centers • National Association of Manufacturers
42 Wholesale Trade	• Wholesalers • Agents and Brokers	• National Retail Federation Foundation • American Purchasing Society

NAICS	NAICS CATEGORIES	CERTIFICATION BODIES
44-45 Retail Trade	• Multiple Categories of Retail Sales and Dealers	• National Retail Federation Foundation
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	• Air, Rail, Truck Transportation • Pipeline Transportation • Warehousing and Storage	• Community Transportation Association of America • American Purchasing Society • Association for Supply Chain Management • Manufacturing Skill Standards Council • National Coalition of Certification Centers
51 Information	• Publishing • Telecommunications • Data Processing and Hosting services	• Amazon, Amazon Web Service • CompTIA • ETA International • Microsoft • Cisco • Oracle
52 Finance and Insurance	• Securities and Investments • Insurance Services • Credit Intermediaries	• International Federation of Technical Analyst • National Alliance for Insurance Education and Research • American Bankers Association • FINRA
53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	• Real Estate Services • Rental and Leasing Services	• National Association of Realtors
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	• Management and Technical Services • Advertising and PR • Accounting and Financial Services	• Institute of Management Consultants • Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering

NAICS	NAICS CATEGORIES	CERTIFICATION BODIES
55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	• Multiple categories of Enterprise Management Services	• Association for Supply Chain Management • ASIS International
56 Admin. and Waste Services	• Waste Management and Remediation Services	• Solid Waste Association of North America
61 Educational Services	• Public and Proprietary Educational Services • Training and Instructional Services	• National Career Development Association • Association for Talent Development
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	• Health Care Systems and Institutions • Individual and Family Services • Vocational Rehabilitation Services	• National Association of Health Care Assistants • American Medical Technologist • National Association of Social Workers • American Medical Association Foundation
71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	• Performing Arts • Museums, Zoos, Parks, Amusement	• National Recreation and Park Association • International Live Events Association
72 Accommodation and Food Services	• Food Service and Drinking Places • Traveler Accommodations	• National Restaurant Association • National Restaurant Association Foundation • American Hotel and Lodging Association
81 Other Services	• Repair and Maintenance • Personal Services	• Automotive Service Excellence
92 Public Administration	• Multiple Categories of Public Administration • National Security • Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	• Global Society of Homeland and National Security Professionals • ASIS International

CONTACT

Spencer Murray
Director of Partnerships
CCD Center
SMurray@ccd-center.org

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