

Educator Certification Handbook 2022



To assist
CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
to become
CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATES



Produced by
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Educator Certification Committee
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Mid Council Ministries
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Educator Certification Handbook – 2022

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Introduction

The Handbook

This handbook has been developed primarily for the use of Educator Certification Advisors as they work with persons seeking to be Certified Christian Educators or those seeking to be endorsed as Christian Education Associates. A print version of these materials can be placed in a binder and kept for use when helping an educator who asks about certification or when someone is identified for whom the certification process would seem appropriate. Other helpful materials can also be added to enhance the work of educators in the Presbytery. All of this content can be found online at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators. This website is necessary when looking for a particular form or specific information related to educator certification.

Although the Educator Certification Committee has made every attempt to work out the details of the process, we recognize that there may be omissions or errors in the handbook. From time to time, you may receive notifications about revisions to the handbook. The most recent version will always be available on the website.

Why Certification?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, continuing development in the field of Christian education brought about the emergence of professionally trained leaders whose focus in ministry was on the nurture and education of persons in their faith. Some were pastors in the church, but many were skilled and dedicated persons who felt a call to ministry but not to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Over the ensuing decades, their gifts and services as "educators" in the church have enriched the lives of countless numbers of people and contributed to the formation of a rich history of professional leadership by church educators. In recognition of that history and because of the importance of Christian Education to the total ministry of the church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sought to recognize and to enhance the ministries of persons employed as professional Christian educators by certifying them as Certified Christian Educators or Certified Associate Christian Educators, or by enrolling them as Enrolled Educational Assistants. Certification was then granted at the end of an intensive process of preparation, study, service, and examination.

Now, as we live into the twenty-first century, much has changed in the church and in the field of Christian Education but this does not mean that educational ministries in congregations have lessened in importance. In fact, it is critical that congregations have every opportunity for the very highest quality of educational ministry to ensure that disciples of Christ will continue to be made now and in the future.

As the church changes, so must the process of certification of Christian educators. To that end the PC(USA) still seeks to recognize and enhance the ministries of persons called to serve the church as Christian educators by certifying them as Certified Christian Educators or by endorsing them as Christian Education Associates.

The Purpose of this process is:

1. To continue to set standards for the preparation and performance of Christian educators, both professional and volunteer.
2. To acknowledge and clarify the mutual accountability between the denomination's councils and the Christian educator.
3. To set specific achievable goals for the on-going development of Christian educators and to foster support for them as they pursue these goals.
4. To lift up the need for continuing education for Christian educators so that those providing oversight may provide time and money for this purpose.
5. To provide levels of educational leadership that will assist denominational councils in defining their own needs and in determining just compensation, commensurate with the level of their need.

Ordinarily,

- Those applying for the level of **Certified Christian Educator (CCE)** have a master's degree or a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or its equivalent (previously achieved the level of Certified Associate Christian Educator, Enrolled Educational Assistant or Christian Education Associate)
- **Christian Education Associates (CEA)** – formerly Enrolled Educational Assistants - are not required to hold a degree but have entered the process of formal preparation for certification by successfully completing a number of basic requirements

In recognition of the fact that there are only select places where someone may go to receive a master's or bachelor's degree in Christian education, the certification process has been designed so that many qualified persons who have entered the field through volunteer service and part-time employment in the field, may become certified. In fact, it is possible for a person who does not hold any baccalaureate degree to become certified. To do so, one must complete rigorous programs of continuing education and multiple-step examination processes designed to ensure that those who complete this process are equipped in training and skill as those who hold the degrees.

Both formal and informal academic preparations are considered in the certification process. In addition, significant emphasis is placed upon competent performance, exhibited by experience. The process is designed to be a means of growth for the educator; not only measuring the educator's competence but also helping the educator define needs for additional education. In all cases and at both levels, an educator who is certified, endorsed, or otherwise engaged in the process of preparation for certification is a person who has submitted his or her credentials to a third party, in this case, to the Educator Certification Committee (ECC) through the Educator Certification Coordinator/OGA Staff person (hereafter, Coordinator) for an independent, peer review of his or her gifts for this ministry.

The Church and Christian Educators

The certification process outlined in this handbook attempts to faithfully fulfill the requirements for preparation, examination, and admission to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the Certified Christian Educator as described in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As you read and use it, you will note that the Form of Government, one of the sections of the Book of Order, addresses the ministry of Certified Church Service as well as specifying the skills and training of the Certified Christian Educator. It is the constitutional provision for the Certified Christian Educator and the former level of Certified Associate Christian Educator. The entry level for certification, Christian Education Associate (formerly Enrolled Educational Assistant), is not reflected in the Form of Government. It is an entry level whereby educators who hold no degree may enter the process and work toward certification if they so choose, and is a way the church recognizes the gifts and ministries of persons while encouraging them in their continuing education. The training for endorsement as Christian Education Associate may be helpful background training for dedicated volunteers or for those with advanced degrees NOT in Christian Education who have limited continuing education funds. As such, there are steps in the ongoing process of lifelong learning common to all educators.

The constitutional provisions describing the preparation, examination, and rights of certified Christian educators are found at the end of chapter two of the Form of Government (G-2.11 Certified Church Service). The relevant sections are as follows:

G-2.1101 Forms of Certified Church Service

Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.

G-2.1102 Presbytery and Certified Church Service

The presbytery shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification, and shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification. The presbytery may grant the privilege of voice at all its meetings to persons in certified church service.

G-2.1103 Christian Educators

a. Skills and Training

Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations or councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

b. Presbytery Responsibility

The presbytery shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307). During their term of service in an educational ministry under

the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings.

Other sections of the Form of Government that apply to Christian educators are as follows:

G-3.0303c [Presbytery] Relations with Sessions

c. establish minimum compensation standards for pastoral calls and Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery;

G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Its Pastors and Congregations

Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.

Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to its pastors, both ministers of the Word and Sacrament and, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (also called commissioned pastors [also known as commissioned ruling elders]), as well as the certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, pastors, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.

G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4-3-1, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

Participants in the Certification Process and Their Roles

There are seven key participants in the certification process: the **Educator**, the **Educator Certification Advisor**, the **Reference Group**, the **Educator Certification Committee**, the **Coordinator**, the **Session**, and the **Presbytery**.

The Educator

Those who seek certification are professionals or volunteers with a call to a particular ministry within the church. While many are ministers of Word and Sacrament, the majority of Educators who are certified or enrolled are not. They are seeking certification as a way of enhancing their own continuing education, submitting their credentials for peer review, and maintaining the highest possible standards for ministry preparation, leadership and accountability, thus uplifting the significance of educational ministry for the whole church.

The Educator Certification Advisor

The Educator Certification Advisor provides a link between the Educator Certification Committee, the presbytery, and educators seeking to become Certified Christian Educators or Christian Education Associates. Educator Certification Advisors are recruited, trained, and approved by the Educator Certification Committee in consultation with the presbytery while the presbytery approves the appointment and assists them in their liaison role. The Advisor works with the ECC in relation to the certification requirements, and with the presbytery or its designated committee in relation to the support and accountability of the presbytery for the applicant's educational ministry.

The Educator Certification Advisor should have the following qualifications:

- A heart for Christian education
- Member of the PC(USA)
- Experience in educational ministry and, if possible, be a Certified Educator
- A willingness to participate in training (training is available at selected events and through an online process at **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators**)

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor will be someone who thoroughly understands the Presbyterian system and knows both the structure and functioning of the particular presbytery being served. The person will find it helpful to have a strong background in Christian education, to be certified or seeking certification, and/or be supportive of the concept and the process of certification.

More detail on the role of the Certification Advisor is available in the section of the Handbook entitled "The Educator Certification Advisor." Online training is available on the educator certification website at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators.

The Reference Group

The Reference Group will include:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or denominational council to whom the Educator is responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

The Reference Group provides insight into the Educator's ministry and competencies. As a support system, the Reference Group meets various times to provide encouragement and critiques and to review and comment on the educator's exam before it is sent in its final form.

More detail on the role of the Reference Group is available on the section of the Handbook entitled "The Reference Group." Online training is available on the educator certification website at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators.

The Educator Certification Committee (ECC)

The Educator Certification Committee is made up of nine persons serving four-year terms at the appointment of the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The ECC meets in person at least once yearly with electronic meetings throughout the year. The ECC is funded by per capita through the PC(USA) Office of the General Assembly and its minutes are subject to review by that body. The ECC elects a moderator from among its members. The Coordinator, as a staff person of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is responsible for all administrative functions within the application and certification process. Nominations to the Educator Certification Committee take place through the General Assembly Nominating Committee process. Applications are available at www.pcusa.org/nominations. Specifics about the work of this group can be found in their policy document.

The Educator Certification Coordinator

The Coordinator is a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of the General Assembly staff. The Coordinator receives and processes applications, transcripts, examinations, and evaluations. The Coordinator makes judgments about the adequacy of materials received and may correspond with the applicant and/or the Advisor. If there are any questions related to the information submitted on the application and its applicability to the requirements, the Coordinator will delay any further action until the ECC can review the application.

The Coordinator attends Educator Certification Committee meetings and assists ECC members as they review the files of applicants. The Coordinator communicates ECC

decisions to those affected by them, and submits lists of Certified Educators so that they may be included in the online directory provided by the Office of the General Assembly and the APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) communications.

While the Coordinator is prepared to assist applicants and Advisors regarding particular applications, staff does not make, nor is expected to defend the actions that are the responsibility of the Educator Certification Committee.

The Educator Certification Coordinator can be contacted at:
Martha.Miller@pcusa.org

The Session

Generally speaking, "Session" refers to the Session of the congregation in which the educator serves. Some educators, of course, may not be directly related to a Session. In such cases, the committee or Board of the agency or council to which the educator relates will serve the same functions and will be involved at the same points as the Session.

The Educator should advise her/his Session when beginning the CCE/CEA process. Early involvement is essential so that the Session may be encouraged to provide continuing education assistance (time and funding) for the Educator while completing course work in order to meet the educational requirements. In addition, the Session can be an advocate for the Educator as they continue the process.

There are several places in the process when the Session will be formally involved:

1. When the Educator has made formal application, the clerk of Session or other appropriate agency or council will receive communication asking for their support as the Educator works through the process. At this same time, if the Educator is a volunteer, there will be verification requested.
2. When the Educator is ready to begin the examination phase of the process, the clerk of Session or other appropriate agency or council will receive communication asking the clerk to appoint a representative to serve as a member of the Reference Group for the Educator.
3. During the Examination Phase, a *Verification of Ministry Form* will need to be completed and signed by the individual to whom the Educator is most directly accountable. This may be one of several people such as the Church Business Administrator, Christian Education Committee Chairperson, the Personnel Committee Chairperson or the Moderator.
4. When CCE/CEA is granted, the Clerk of Session will be formally notified. This notification suggests the appropriateness of the congregation/Session, agency or council formally recognizing the Educator's achievement.

The Presbytery

The Form of Government of the PC (USA) (G-2.11, G-3.0303, G-3.0307) provides that the presbytery:

1. encourage those called to service to meet or prepare to meet the certification requirements;
2. shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification;
3. shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification;
4. shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators;
5. shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307)
6. shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to ministers of Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery;
7. facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators;
8. settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.

In addition, during their term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings.

While these passages do not establish a specific process for presbyteries to follow in the certification of church educators, they do make clear the presbytery's right and responsibility to provide oversight for the educator certification process. Some presbyteries take this responsibility very seriously, placing Educators under care of the presbytery while they prepare for certification, requiring a statement of faith to be presented to the presbytery. The following suggestions may be helpful as your presbytery considers its role in relation to the certification process:

1. Decide which committee of presbytery the Educator Certification Advisor(s) will function within. Encourage and support Certification Advisors to participate in the training offered by the Office of Certification.
2. Discuss the certification process with concerned individuals in the presbytery. If they feel additional requirements or other means of supporting educators through the process are necessary, write these up as supplementary to the certification process.
3. Prior to the presentation of an individual educator, involve the whole presbytery to look at the certification process and to approve any addenda added as a result of (2) above. Listen seriously to questions and concerns and if possible make adjustments to accommodate them.
4. Be vigilant in balancing "requirements" with "benefits." Remind presbyters that the main reason for presbytery's involvement in the process is to support the Educator and to recognize the importance of his or her contribution to the presbytery and the church.

The Certified Christian Educator

Ministry Experience and Educational Requirements for the Certified Christian Educator

Persons seeking certification as Certified Christian Educators (CCE) must meet one of the following minimum requirements scenarios:

Scenario One: No Prior Certification

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
- Hold a bachelor's or a master's degree from an accredited institution
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian education ministry leadership within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency.*
- Completion of an online application at <http://educator-certification.pcusa.org> including all electronic transcripts and a current position description/confirmation of volunteer hours.
- Completion of certification-approved courses in the following knowledge/skill areas (a list of approved courses for PC(USA) educator certification and standards related to their content can be found on-line at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators) –
 - At least 3 course credits or 30 hours** in each of the following areas:
 - *Biblical Interpretation* - This area includes exegetical skills, but does not include a requirement to know and use the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek. Courses in Biblical Interpretation are designed to highlight the historic commitment of the Presbyterian tradition to the Scriptures, tying together an understanding of the "word of God written" (Confession of 1967, I.C.2) with "the true word of God" (Second Helvetic Confession 5.001-2). Presbyterian Christian Educators need a foundational comprehension of Scripture as well as the tools to appropriately exegete and interpret the Bible for the context in which they are serving. Courses will teach the basic principles of biblical interpretation through the lens of the Reformed Tradition and teach at least one exegetical method. Exegetical models will encourage historical and cultural readings of texts, and instructors will encourage and equip educators to do research using resources from various reputable sources, modern and historical. The goal of these courses is to ground educators in the method required to make them servants "rightly handling the word of truth" in accordance with the certification standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Successful completion of the Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
 - *Reformed Theology* - Courses in the area of Reformed Theology are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian educators with a clear understanding of the theology of the Reformed Tradition, especially as it is expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions. Courses explore the content of those confessions, the historical contexts out of which they arose, and the contemporary significance those confessions have for the life of the church today. By means of varied teaching methods and learning activities (e.g., lectures, small group exercises, discussions, and personal research), students will be able to gain a personal understanding of the Reformed theological tradition. Courses will also allow participants to gain a balanced understanding of the broad landscape of Reformed theological understandings today. It is expected that a course will, minimally, include in-depth study of the Book of

Confessions and/or cover extensive reading in the works of Reformed theologians.

Successful completion of the Theological Competence Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.

Religious Education Theory and Practice - Courses in Religious Education and Practice are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian Educators with an understanding of the theory and theology that informs their basis of choice for education methods and materials. Courses will explore multiple theories for religious education and engage in reading of current literature in religious education theory and practice. They encourage critical engagement of practical experiences or situations to inspect the underlying theory and practice of education. A successful class participant will be able to relate their own educational activities with a religious education theorist.

Worship and Sacraments – Courses offered in the area of worship and sacraments explore the theology and practice of Christian worship and sacraments from a Reformed perspective. In addition, courses explore the relationships between worship, sacraments, and education in a congregational context. Courses aim to enhance the participants' participation in, leadership of, preparation for, and teaching about worship and sacraments.

Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged. Successful completion of the Worship and Sacraments Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.

Human Growth and Faith Development (within the last 15 years) - Courses designed to fulfill the Human Growth and Faith Development content area acknowledge that educational ministry encompasses people of every age. Across the lifespan our learners' thinking, moral reasoning, and faith expressions change as they age. This course explores historical and contemporary developmental theories from a faith perspective. Participants are asked to critique and apply the theories to their educational ministry with all ages. Work in this area must be life-span, include exposure to faith development, and fall within a fifteen-year statute of limitations. It also should include the work of newer theorists especially in cognitive, social and gender issues.

- At least 1.5 credits or 15 hours** each (usually offered as one 3 credit course):
Presbyterian Polity - The educator must be able to demonstrate both an understanding of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) polity and pastoral sensitivity in its application.

Successful completion of the Church Polity Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.

Presbyterian Program and Mission - This area includes knowledge of current resources and mission emphases of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Graduation from a PC(USA) seminary also fulfills this requirement.

Together, the courses in Presbyterian polity, program, and mission will integrate the study of the Presbyterian Constitution (Book of Confessions and Book of Order) and Program and Mission of the PCUSA into the context of the educator. Scripture, polity, and the structure, mission and program of the PCUSA, as it is described and resourced by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, usually provides the content for this certification course. Critical examination, guided exploration, and careful integration of those key resources provides educators an opportunity to draw upon the richness of the Presbyterian tradition as they take leadership roles in their congregations and ministries. The course will provide opportunities for educators to explore how the polity, program, and

mission of the PCUSA will impact, guide, and influence their educational programs and events.

- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of current employment or volunteer work in educational ministry leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upon completion of the examination;

Scenario Two: Prior Certification as a Certified Associate Christian Educator (CACE)

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian education ministry within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency. *
- Completion of a course in the following knowledge/skill area:
 - Worship & Sacraments: See above for course description. Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged. Successful completion of the Worship and Sacraments Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
- Completion of an additional course in Human Growth and Faith Development if the previous course was not completed within fifteen (15) years.
- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of employment or volunteer work in educational ministry leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upon completion of the examination.

* In computing a year of experience, the following equivalents apply:
1 year of full-time ministry (at least 25 hours per week); OR,
2 years of half-time ministry (16-24 hours per week); OR,
3 years of third-time (10-15 hours per week)

** Certification courses require an instructor, a minimum of three participants (exceptions to the minimum number of participants may be considered by the ECC to fulfill necessary accommodations) and 30 hours of engagement (examples of engagement are preparation, reading, instruction, assignments).

There are 3 possible course delivery modes:

- Face-to-face
- Online: synchronous and/or asynchronous online engagement
- Hybrid: a combination of face-to-face and online engagement

Steps in the Certified Christian Educator Process

The process leading to certification varies according to one's educational background, previous experience, and level of certification. Getting as much information as one can as early in the process as possible will greatly simplify the process and reduce frustrations.

Step One — Application and Reference Group Process

- A. Educator searches the website www.pcusa.org/christianeducators and reviews the informative overview of the certification process and its requirements.
- B. Educator obtains transcripts from previously completed Master's and/or Bachelor's Degree Programs from accredited institutions as well as verification of previous Educator Certification Courses and current position description or volunteer verification.
- C. Educator begins the application process by creating an account and entering the appropriate application information at <https://educator-certification.pcusa.org/>. As a part of the application, the educator will make connection with an Educator Certification Advisor.
- D. The Advisor and Educator identify any missing knowledge and skill areas. Together they create a tentative plan for additional courses using the list of approved courses found at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators and any additional seminary and college course offerings. The Educator ordinarily should wait to begin coursework until after the courses are reviewed and approved by the Coordinator.
- E. Upon application submission, the Coordinator will review the information submitted and verify the requirements already completed while also noting any missing information.
- F. Coordinator sends an email to the Educator's Session, agency or council, with a copy to the presbytery, informing them that the Educator has entered the certification process and requesting their support.
- G. Educator completes course work; checks with Advisor to be sure all requirements are met; and submits relevant transcripts, syllabi, and/or CEUs for any additional courses taken, making updates in the educator's certification account.
- H. Coordinator emails the Session, council or agency to which the Educator is accountable, advising it of the applicant's progress and advising them to appoint a representative to the Reference Group. The Advisor and presbytery stated clerk are also copied.
- I. Advisor notifies the Coordinator when satisfied with the Educator's plan for proceeding to the exam phase by completing the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.
- J. Educator and Advisor together select other persons to serve as a Reference Group. The Reference Group includes:
 - A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
 - Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
 - Representative appointed by the Session or agency/council to whom the Educator is

- responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if applicable)

K. Educator and Advisor set date for first meeting of Reference Group.

Step Two — Examination

A. Educator emails the coordinator with the specific date on which the exam is requested to be received.

Note: The examination process, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design and final meetings of the Reference Group must be completed within six (6) months of the date the examination is sent by the Coordinator.

B. Coordinator sends Educator:
The Exam Instructions

C. Coordinator sends Advisor:
Instructions for Examination and Reference Group Process
Advisor retrieves forms online:
Exam Evaluation forms for the Reference Group and Advisor
Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting
Verification of Ministry Form

D. Educator completes examination prior to the meeting of the Reference Group in order to have time for possible revisions; sends copies as follows:
To Advisor
To each member of Reference Group (including copy of exam instructions, exam checklist, and *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam* from Advisor)

E. Reference Group meets:

- Examination is discussed
- Exam evaluation forms are discussed and completed
- Educator receives recommendations for revisions to his or her examination **or** Reference Group makes a recommendation for approval to the Certification Committee through the Coordinator.
- Evaluation forms are given to Advisor to be compiled and sent to the Certification Committee.

F. Educator completes revisions if requested. Reference Group reviews changes and decides to approve exam to be sent to the ECC or recommends that an extension should be sought.

G. Advisor and educator meet to reflect on the process and learnings:
Advisor writes evaluation of educator in context of process;
Educator reflects on his/her learnings as a result of process.

H. Educator submits the examination and the signed exam checklist electronically to the Coordinator for Certification at **certificationexams@pcusa.org**.

- I. Advisor sends *Exam Evaluation Form for Advisor Only, Advisor's Summary of Evaluation*, and completed *Verification of Ministry Form* to Coordinator.
- J. Coordinator sends examination to three readers — one independent reader and two members of the Educator Certification Committee.

Step Three — Certification

- A. Educator Certification Exam Readers submit evaluations and make their recommendation which could be either:
 1. that the readers approve the exam for certification.
 2. that the readers do not approve the exam at this time due to specific deficiencies in the examination.
- B. If certification is not recommended, Coordinator writes to Educator with copy to Advisor, outlining additional work to be completed. The letter shall specify how that work is to be submitted for review and subsequent action on certification.
- C. If certification is recommended, the ECC grants certification at its next meeting and the Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator with a copy to Advisor, along with an invitation to submit the *Reflections on Learning* form.

In specific cases, the ECC grants certification pending Verification of Ministry (for those who cannot verify employment or volunteer work at the time of the examination).

- a. To be certified, an individual must be gainfully employed or volunteer for ten (10) hours or more per week in educational ministry leadership and be accountable to a board, an agency or a governing body of PC(USA) at the time of exam submission as represented on the Verification of Ministry Form.
 - b. An individual who has had at least one year of work experience may go through the process while unemployed. Upon completion of requirements, a letter stating that the educator is “certified upon verification of ministry” will be provided. There is a three-year limit between completion of certification requirements and verification of ministry. Employed persons may begin the certification process at any time. (ECC Policies, 5)
1. The ECC's action is reported to the appropriate council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Educator's name is placed on the list of certified Christian educators on the PC (USA) website.
 2. Coordinator sends Certificate and suggested Service of Recognition, together with letter of explanation to the appropriate presbytery staff. The Service of Recognition includes an opportunity for the Educator to present a Statement of Faith to the Presbytery after which the Presbytery presents the certificate to the Educator.
 3. Communication and appropriate service of recognition is sent to Moderator/Clerk of Session or appropriate person in the Educator's responsible agency or council.
 4. Coordinator also notifies Advisor and Association of Presbyterian Church Educators

The CCE Integrative Examination (Exam)

The examination process is designed to be **a learning AND an assessment process**.

When the Coordinator notifies the Educator that all requirements are completed and the Advisor has submitted the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* to the Coordinator, the Educator may request the examination. It is a "take-home, open book" examination that must be completed within a six-month time period, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design. As a result, ALL work must be original to the exam rather than material that has been previously a part of coursework or work in the church. A prominent feature of the process is feedback, especially from a Reference Group who will meet with the Educator to review his or her materials prior to their submission to the Educator Certification Committee. The Reference Group can and should offer suggestions to the Educator for improvements in his or her materials. Critical reflection is a key element in any learning process, indicative of the fact that one can gain insights from reflections upon the process as well as the content. It is essential that the reference group highlight any inadequacies in the exam and require them to be addressed before submission to the Coordinator for ECC review,

If an Educator endures serious illness or a critical personal hardship during the six month exam period resulting in the inability to complete the exam during this time frame, the Educator and the Certification Advisor can contact the Coordinator to discuss the possibility of a Leave of Absence.

In searching for indications of one's mastery of the required knowledge and skill areas, the examination focuses on the Educator's application of content to practical settings. Examination readers look for signs of the Educator's relational skills, communication skills, planning skills, educational resource skills, integration of a knowledge base with practice, integration across disciplines, and consistency within the Reformed tradition.

For the examination, the Reference Group will receive a packet of information from the Advisor, including a copy of *Guidelines for the Reference Group meeting* and a copy of the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. After the Reference Group process and the exam is submitted electronically, the Coordinator will send the examination to one independent reader and two ECC members for evaluation prior to the Committee meetings. **All evaluations by independent readers and ECC members are anonymous** – that is to say that the readers have no knowledge of who the Educator is, where they live, what type of situation they are in, or any other detail that might give a reader any insight into the identity or makeup of the Educator. The evaluations by these readers provide the basis for the ECC's decision and recommendations.

In writing the examination, the Educator needs to be careful to avoid or remove all specific references to a particular congregation, location, person's names, his/her own name, etc. in order to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the process.

The Educator also needs to refrain from quoting the work(s) of others without proper attribution. Plagiarism is intentionally presenting any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his/her own without giving proper credit to the original source and with disregard for proper academic research procedures. For proper academic research procedure, refer to *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Theses, Term Papers and Dissertations*, 8th edition. If examination readers

identify plagiarism within the exam, the writer will be asked to rewrite the plagiarized Part of the exam.

Educator Certification Committee Reading and Evaluation

Examinations will be reviewed by the educator certification exam readers as they are received. Exam results will ordinarily be given no later than two months after all parts were submitted to certificationexams@pcusa.org.

When Certification Is Not Granted

For many Educators, the certification process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all, parts of the examination. In those cases certification will not be granted without some additional work. The Educator and the Advisor will receive a copy of a letter outlining the ECC's decision and remaining requirements.

Possible Outcomes

1. The Educator Certification Committee may require that an Educator rewrite one or more parts of the examination. This usually indicates a serious deficiency. It may involve rewriting a particular part. This action may delay certification until a subsequent meeting of the Committee.
2. The ECC may suggest that the Educator participate in additional continuing education in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.
3. The ECC may suggest that the Educator complete additional readings in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.

The examination and reading processes are designed to be learning/growing experiences as well as evaluative experiences. It is the hope of the ECC that each Educator will see rewriting and additional continuing education as opportunities to develop professionally.

The Educator Certification Advisor, in working with an Educator who is not granted certification is asked to:

1. Interpret to the Educator and, as necessary, the Session and presbytery, the comments, concerns and requirements of the readers, the Reference Group, and/or the Educator Certification Committee. The Advisor may need to confer with a Session or presbytery committee that is concerned about the qualifications of an Educator who is requested to rewrite. If appropriate, the interpretation should help them see the value of an Educator who seeks to be professionally accredited, to do whatever is required to aid professional growth and development, and to round out his/her abilities as an Educator.
2. Encourage the Educator to pursue whatever additional requirements have been outlined.

In most cases of a rewrite, the Educator will be given three months to complete the rewrite.

This submission will be read by at least one of the original readers. Following the receipt of the exam rewrite, readers will ordinarily submit comments to Coordinator within 2 months.

(When the exam is resubmitted to the Committee, ordinarily it will be read by the same committee readers who read the original exam. If two readers come to different conclusions regarding the rewritten exam, a third reader will be asked to evaluate the exam rewrite.)

If at any time, the requirements are unclear, or if the Advisor and the Educator have questions about interpreting the action of the ECC, the Coordinator for Certification should be contacted.

The Christian Education Associate (CEA) – formerly *Enrolled Educational Assistant (EEA)*

Requirements for the Christian Education Associate

The process for **Christian Education Associate (CEA)** is designed to recognize the role and status of the Educator with or without formal academic training. The Educator Certification Committee (ECC) recognizes that many of those who are serving in educational ministries in churches and presbyteries have responded to a need and/or a call, even though they had little training or preparation for the ministry. The goal of the CEA endorsement process is to introduce the educator to basic knowledge and skills related to Christian Education and to whet their appetites so that they will want to pursue further course work and move toward the Certified Christian Educator level.

Persons seeking endorsement as Christian Education Associates (CEA) must complete the following requirements:

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- Active in educational ministry within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency.
- Completion of an online application at <http://educator-certification.pcusa.org>.
- Completion of an online initial assessment for each content area. Results of the initial assessments will determine where further study is needed.
 - Content areas for the CEA are Biblical Interpretation, Reformed Theology, Religious Education Theory and Practice, Human Growth and Faith Development, Worship and Sacraments, and Presbyterian Polity, Program, and Mission.
- The educator will be directed to develop a plan of study with their Advisor using a variety of resources to deepen understanding in the content area.
- Successful completion of the online final assessment for each content area. All final assessments are to be completed within three years from submission of application (in case of extenuating life circumstances, the Educator and their Advisor are to contact the Coordinator).

Steps in the Christian Education Associate Process

Step One — Application

- A. Educator reviews the material on the website www.pcusa.org/christianeducators to become familiar with the CEA endorsement process and its requirements.
- B. Educator begins the application process by creating an account and entering the appropriate application information at <https://educator-certification.pcusa.org/>. As a part of

the application, the educator will make connection with an Educator Certification Advisor.

- C. Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the application and sends the Educator the link to the online initial assessments for all content areas.
- D. Coordinator sends correspondence to the Educator's Session, agency or council, with a copy to the presbytery, informing them that the Educator has entered the endorsement process and requesting their support.

Step Two — Online Initial Assessment

- A. The Educator completes the online initial assessment for each content area (the Educator can choose to take all Initial Assessments at once or focus on a particular content area).
- B. The Educator and Advisor discuss the results of the initial assessments.

Step Three – Plan of Study

- A. The initial assessment results will guide the Educator and the Advisor to design a plan of study in the content area using the resource lists provided.
- B. The Educator uses the plan of study created with the Advisor to deepen knowledge and skills in the content areas, using the Advisor as a conversation partner.
- C. Resources the Educator may use include (specific resource lists available at the end of the content area's initial assessment):
 - a. online training/resources
 - b. continuing education courses/workshops
 - c. workbooks/studies
 - d. books/articles
 - e. other resources determined with the Advisor

Step Four — Final Assessment

- A. Once the plan of study is completed, the Educator meets with their Advisor to determine readiness for the final assessment in that particular content area.
- B. The Educator requests the online final assessment for a content area from the Coordinator and takes the final assessment. The Educator may request an alternative testing method if needed.
- C. The Final Assessment is reviewed by two members of the Educator Certification Committee and makes its recommendations: successfully completed the content area or retake.
- D. The Educator may take the final assessment for each content area until they successfully complete it. The Educator will choose a different option in that content area for their retake of the Final Assessment.

Step Five — Endorsement

- A. Successful completion of the final assessments in all six content areas results in endorsement as a Christian Education Associate.
- B. The Coordinator reports CEA final assessment status and endorsements to the ECC quarterly.
- C. The Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator. Notification is also sent to the Advisor and Clerk of Session. A letter and certificate is sent to the Stated Clerk of the Educator's Presbytery.

The Certification Advisor

The Work and Ministry of the Educator Certification Advisor

The Educator Certification Advisor provides a link between the Educator Certification Committee, the presbytery, and Educators seeking to become Certified Christian Educators or Christian Education Associates. Educator Certification Advisors are recruited, trained, and approved by the Educator Certification Committee in consultation with the presbytery while the presbytery approves the appointment and assists them in their liaison role. The Advisor works with the ECC in relation to the certification requirements, and with the presbytery or its designated committee in relation to the support and accountability of the presbytery for the applicant's educational ministry.

The Educator Certification Advisor will have the following qualifications:

- A heart for Christian education
- Member of the Presbyterian Church(USA)
- Experience in educational ministry and, if possible, a certified educator
- A willingness to participate in training (training is available at selected sites and through an online process at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor will be someone who thoroughly understands the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) system and knows both the structure and functioning of the particular presbytery being served. It would be most helpful if the Advisor has **direct and regular access to whatever committee of presbytery carries responsibility for the certification process**. The person will find it helpful to have a strong background in Christian education, to be certified or seeking certification, and/or be supportive of the concept and the process of certification. The person who undertakes this responsibility will need to be skilled in working with individuals, sessions, and committees, sometimes under awkward and potentially difficult situations.

The person who serves as the Educator Certification Advisor will maintain close contact with the Coordinator and can expect support and counsel from the Coordinator throughout the process.

The Educator Certification Advisor has a number of **key responsibilities**, including the following:

- To become and remain informed about the certification process, and to provide this information to Educators, sessions and committees of the presbytery
- To meet with each applicant for certification or endorsement to review the process and the requirements, and to advise the applicant regarding the appropriate level for which to apply
- To review with the applicant all applicable academic and experience qualifications, and to assist the Educator in finding ways to satisfy unmet requirements
- To serve as a conversation partner as the Educator seeking endorsement as

a CEA develops and completes the content areas' plan of study and final assessments.

- To assist the applicant for certification in the selection of a Reference Group and to serve as one member of that Reference Group as the presbytery's appointee
- To go to the Session or responsible agency or council, with the Educator, to explain the process and to advocate for support (i.e., time and money) for continuing education and time for writing the examination
- To inform the Coordinator that the Advisor is satisfied with the Educator's readiness to proceed to the certification exam phase using the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.
- To convene and moderate the Reference Group as it reviews and evaluates the Educator's responses to examination questions, and to process the results of that review. It is the Certification Advisor's responsibility to orient the members of the Reference Group and to convey the importance of holding the Educator's work to high standards of excellence. **PLEASE NOTE: The Educator Certification Committee will not accept exams for reading if they have not been approved by the Reference Group and the Advisor.**
- To obtain verification of ministry of the Educator when the examination is completed.
- To assist the Educator in fulfilling any other requirements and responsibilities established by the presbytery, which might include preparing and presenting a statement of faith, assisting in the writing of a position description of a call, and reviewing the adequacy of compensation with the responsible agency or council.
- To plan an appropriate service of recognition along with the presbytery and the Educator.
- To identify ways in which the Educator can overcome deficiencies identified by the ECC upon receipt of the evaluation of the Educator Certification Committee and to review any resubmitted work to be sure that the deficiencies have been completely and appropriately addressed.
- To function as an advocate for the certification process as a means for insuring excellence in the educational ministry of the church - especially for the presbytery's churches, pastors, and educators
- To fulfill any other requirements outlined by the presbytery

The Advisor's Role Along the Path Toward Certification/Endorsement

A. Application

The entry point for the Advisor in his or her relationship with the Educator is in the **application process**, especially in evaluating credentials. The Advisor may be called upon to interpret to the Educator decisions by the ECC that educational preparation or ministry experience is not adequate for the level to which they believe themselves qualified. In consulting with Educators about the level of certification they should seek, please keep in mind that the validity of any certification process is the degree to which its standards are upheld. Regardless of which level of certification or endorsement the Educator seeks, both the process and the title should be honored as a measure of attainment. Advisors should be ready to press Educators to seek the level that is appropriate for them. The very fact that the Educator is open to subject his or her ministry experience and educational background to this type of evaluation is an accomplishment, and should be applauded by the Advisor, the presbytery represented, and the Session or responsible agency or council.

An important part of the work of the Educator Certification Advisor is assisting the Educator to recall and **evaluate academic preparation**. This includes helping the Educator to evaluate studies already completed, identifying gaps in academic preparation, and helping the Educator find ways to fill those gaps. The Advisor role is to guide the Educator through the process, not to become the interpreter of standards. Defer that role to the ECC.

B. Developing A Study Plan

An important step in the process is **planning a program of study**, which must be shaped by the advice and the requirements set by the Educator Certification Committee. This is often a point at which great sensitivity on the part of the Advisor will be a critical requirement.

Words of encouragement from an Advisor, or willingness to do some of the work in finding opportunities and/or funding, ability to approach Sessions or other responsible agencies or councils with the Educator to explain this call, could make all the difference both to the Educator and to the church. This is also a point at which to try to pick up signals of some **practical concerns** that may be on the mind of the Educator, for example, the **cost of the program**. If costs of continuing education seem to be a concern to the Educator, the Advisor may want to help by:

1. Identifying possible sources of funds in the presbytery or synod that can be used for continuing education for the Educator.
2. Speaking to the pastor of the church or arranging to meet with the Session or other appropriate committee of the church, to emphasize the importance of their Educator's professional development to improving the ministry of their congregation, urging them to provide funds to defray some of the costs.

The Certification Advisor may also have a role in relationship to the Educator's Session or responsible agency or council. Its members may worry that their Educator's

certification will increase the cost to the church or encourage him or her to consider leaving for a better situation. Either of these worries may make them less than enthusiastic about certification. The Advisor can stress that there are usually benefits to the church when one's staff is engaged in meaningful continuing education.

In relation to **working with an educator's Session**, there are specific requests to be made and a number of "**common sense**" rules Certification Advisor's will want to follow.

Educator Certification Advisors should:

1. Encourage the Educator to notify the Session of his/her intentions as early in the process as possible.
2. Serve as liaison/interpreter for the Session, if necessary, regarding the goals and process of certification.
3. Enlist the Session's participation in the certification process, encouraging them to appoint their representative to the Reference Group.
4. Enlist the Session's support in the process by encouraging them to provide adequate time and finances for Continuing Education and time for writing the examination or Final Assessments.
5. Maintain contact with the Session's appointee to the Reference Group regarding his/her role, responsibilities, meeting times, etc.
6. Be responsible for obtaining a completed *Verification of Ministry Form* from the Session.
7. Serve as interpreter to the Session if certification is not granted immediately and additional continuing education is required.
8. Encourage the Session to recognize the Educator's certification or endorsement in a meaningful way.

C. Forming the Reference Group for the CCE Level

Once the Educator has completed the educational requirements, and the Certification Advisor has submitted the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*, it is time to work with the Educator toward the formation of the Reference Group. The Coordinator will send instructions, and you will find more information under the "Reference Group" section of this handbook.

The Reference Group consists of:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian Educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or agency/council to whom the Educator is responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

Training for Reference Group members is available in an online format at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators. Certification Advisors may choose to send a link to this training experience as Reference Group members begin their service or may use the training as part of the Groups' first gathering.

D. Working with the CCE Examination Phase

When all the educational requirements are completed, and the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* submitted, the Coordination will send a letter of acceptance and, the Educator may move on to the final phase of examination.

When the Educator's examination is sent, the Advisor will receive a notice that will include the date by which the examination, including the report from the Reference Group, must be returned to the office in Louisville. In consultation with the Educator, the Advisor is asked to set target dates for the completion of the first draft of the examination and a meeting of the Reference Group. It is recommended that the Reference Group review the first draft of the exam at least four weeks prior to the deadline to allow for revisions and reworking.

E. Verification of Ministry

1. The certification process seeks to measure both academic preparation and professional or volunteer experience. For that reason, ordinarily, a person cannot be certified without at least a year's full-time experience or its equivalent as an active Christian Educator, either voluntary or by employment. **PLEASE NOTE:** An application may be submitted at any time (even prior to the completion of one year's ministry experience). The examination may not be requested until this experience requirement is fulfilled.

PLEASE NOTE: Ordinarily, at the time of certification, applicants for Certification as Christian Educators must be serving in educational ministry leadership for ten (10) or more hours per week in a church or agency of the PC (USA).

2. Determining Service and “effective performance”

The Reference Group process will be the primary means of determining effective performance of an applicant. This group consists of persons who know first-hand the service of the Educator. The examination, including an autobiographical statement and a faith statement, will furnish a framework for conversations about the educator’s ministry.

3. A *Verification of Ministry* Form will be sent to the Advisor. It is the Advisor’s responsibility to have this form completed and to return it to the Coordinator with evaluation forms. In a case when this verification is not possible, the Advisor should inform the Coordinator of the situation. The ECC may grant the CCE/CEA pending future receipt of a current *Verification of Ministry* Form.

F. Tips for the Educator Certification Advisor

There are a number of resources that will be helpful to the Advisor during the examination and Reference Group phase of this process with the Educator. Forms available at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators include:

1. *Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting*
2. *Advisor’s Summary of Evaluation Forms*
3. *CCE Guidelines for Readers*. These guidelines are used by the ECC and Independent readers to evaluate the exams and are for your information. Please be sure that the educator has received this document at the beginning of the exam writing period and follows ALL of the instructions given in the exam.

All of the evaluations and relevant supporting papers should be gathered by the Advisor and sent to the Coordinator.

G. Tips for Working with the Presbytery to support Educators

Some specific ways in which the presbytery might support the certification of Christian Educators:

- If not already present, arrange for a fellowship group for the Educators of the presbytery.
- Develop minimum salary requirements for the Certified Christian Educator and those who are maintaining the Certified Associate Christian Educator level, which include cash, pension coverage, Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, etc.
- Develop and maintain a roll of Certified Educators serving within the bounds of Presbytery.
- Provide a way by which the presbytery recognizes the fact that an Educator has **begun** the certification process. This may be in the form of taking the person under care of the presbytery, or it may simply be an expression of support and concern.
- Identify sources of financial support both to help the Educator complete certification requirements and to provide ongoing continuing education.
- When an Educator is about to be certified, arrange a meeting between the Educator and the Presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for care and oversight

of Educators, wherein they may discuss the process, complete any other requirements of presbytery, and hear and respond to the Educator's statement of faith.

- Review the Recognition services and adapt them to be specifically meaningful to the Educator and to the presbytery.
- Make sure adequate time is allotted on the agenda when an Educator is to be certified and plan other ways in which the presbytery can participate in the celebration of this event. Consider inviting other Educators who may not ordinarily attend presbytery to be present.
- Develop a call form or a covenant, which includes a position description and details regarding salary, continuing education and other forms of the call. Require that the appropriate committee of the presbytery submit a completed form for approval.
- Assure that the Educator has access to the appropriate mechanisms and processes within the presbytery for pastoral care and counseling per the Book of Order (G-3.0307).

H. Preparing the Educator for Endorsement as a Christian Education Associate

The process for a Christian Education Associate is much less involved than for Certified Christian Educator. Since there is no Reference Group, the Advisor's primary role is to work with the Educator in developing a plan of study, based on the online initial assessment results and the resources recommended. Once the plan of study is determined, the Advisor encourages the Educator and checks in regarding their progress.

The Reference Group

A. Purpose of the Reference Group

The Reference Group is formed to encourage the Educator in the certification process for Certified Christian Educator as well as to attest to and to promote the Educator's professional competency and personal character.

B. Accountability of the Reference Group

The Educator Certification Advisor and the Reference Group are responsible to the Educator Certification Committee (ECC) and the presbytery for the integrity of the process.

C. Formation of the Reference Group

It is suggested that the Educator Certification Advisor offer to meet with the Session or responsible agency or council to interpret the certification process and elicit support for their Educator once the Application Form and supplemental material (Educational Requirements Worksheet, Transcripts, etc.) have been sent to the Coordinator.

The Educator Certification Advisor should work with the Educator in the formation and contact of the Reference Group members following the completion of the Educator's educational requirements and the submission of the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.

The Reference Group will include:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian Educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or employing agency/council to whom the Educator is responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convenor of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

Training for Reference Group members is available in an online format at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators.

D. Responsibilities of the Reference Group during the Examination Phase of the Process

The following process best assures that these responsibilities are carried out:

1. Prior to Beginning Review of the Exam

Step a. – With the Educator and in consultation with other Reference Group members, select dates on which the Reference Group will meet. The first meeting of the Reference Group with the Educator is to clarify the purpose of the meeting, the role of the Reference Group in the certification process and to ask questions, so as to allow Reference Group members a chance to become more familiar with the process and their expectations. This is a time for the Reference Group to view the online training module for Reference Groups.

Step b. – Between meetings, members of the Reference Group are to maintain contact

with the Educator, to offer support and encouragement.

2. Prior to Reference Group Meetings with the Educator

Group members should receive a copy of the completed examination from the Educator at two weeks prior to the meeting date. Reference Group members will also receive from the Educator a copy of *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. Each member of the Reference Group is to carefully and critically review the exam and complete the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. **It is at this stage of the examination process where an insightful, discerning critique from Reference Group members is essential. Any rewrites deemed necessary at this stage may prevent rewrites mandated by the exam readers after submission.** An exam may be re-submitted to the ECC with revision only once. Should the exam still contain deficiencies, the exam will fail and the Educator who wishes to move forward must begin the exam process with a whole new exam, including a new educational design and supporting essays.

3. The Reference Group Meeting with the Educator

Step c. – Meet with the Educator, review responses from Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam.

The Educator Certification Advisor will convene and moderate the meeting.

Step d. – At the meeting, the Reference Group should also discuss the Educator’s plans for future ministry development.

Step e. – The Reference Group should excuse the Educator and proceed to discuss all evaluations and to decide to recommend or to not recommend certification.

Step f. – The Educator will be invited to return and will be informed of the Reference Group’s decision with appropriate follow-up (i.e., parts that need to be rewritten).

PLEASE NOTE: The exam should not be sent on to the Educator Certification Committee without Reference Group approval of the exam. It will not be accepted for reading without this approval.

4. Following the Reference Group Meeting with the Educator

Step g. – Following the meeting of the Reference Group, the Educator Certification Advisor will meet once more with the Educator to reflect on the entire application, examination and Reference Group process. The Advisor will then complete the evaluation form.

Step h. – The Educator Certification Advisor will complete the appropriate forms from the educator certification website for submission to the Coordinator.

NOTE: The Coordinator will not send the examination to readers until the Reference Group process has been completed to the satisfaction of the Advisor and the Coordinator has received the *Examination Evaluation Form for Advisor Only*.