

Competency and Credentialing Institute (CCI) Glossary of Credentialing Terms

The Competency and Credentialing Institute is dedicated to supporting its more than 30,000 current certificants and ensuring they understand the credentialing process. We have compiled a glossary of common credentialing terms that CCI, and other certifying agencies, use regularly to help fulfill the goal of educating our certificants.

Accreditation	The process by which an agency or organization evaluates and recognizes a program of study of an institution as meeting certain predetermined qualifications or standards. Accreditation usually applies only to institutions and programs. <i>(Starting a Certification Program, 2nd Edition)</i>
Certificant	An individual who has earned a credential awarded through a certification program. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i>
Certificate Program	A certificate program is a training or education program on a topic for which participants receive a certificate after attendance and/or completion of the coursework. Some programs also require successful demonstration of attainment of the course objectives. One who completes a professional certificate program is known as a certificate holder . A credential is usually NOT granted at the completion of a certificate program. <i>(The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts, 2005)</i>
Certification	The process, often voluntary, by which individuals who have demonstrated the level of knowledge and skill required in the profession, occupation, role, or skill are identified to the public and other stakeholders. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i>
Certification Program	The standards, policies, procedures, assessment instruments, and related products and activities through which individuals are publicly identified as qualified in a profession, occupation, role, or skill. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i>
Content Domains	The set of organized categories characterizing subject matter under which knowledge and skills may be represented in specifications for assessment instruments. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i>

Competence	<p>A combination of skill, knowledge, and performance. Its attainment is evidenced by an individual's ability to apply the necessary knowledge and skills in daily practice. <i>(Starting a Certification Program, 2nd Edition)</i></p>
Credentialing	<p>Credentialing is the umbrella term that includes the concepts of accreditation, licensure, registration, and professional certification. It is criteria for fairness, quality, competence, and/or safety for professional services provided by authorized individuals, for products, or for educational endeavors. Credentialing is the process by which an entity, authorized and qualified to do so, grants formal recognition to, or records the recognition status of individuals, organizations, institutions, programs, processes, services or products that meet predetermined and standardized criteria. <i>(The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts, 2005)</i></p>
Credentialing Process	<p>A method for maintaining <i>quality</i> standards of knowledge and performance, and in some cases, for stimulating <i>continued self-improvement</i>. Credentialing confers occupational <i>identity</i>. <i>(The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts, 2005)</i></p>
Eligibility Requirements	<p>Published criteria, often benchmarks for education, training, and experience, with which applicants must demonstrate compliance in order to qualify for certification. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Equating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A statistical process used to convert scores on two or more alternate forms of an assessment instrument to a common score for purposes of comparability and equivalence. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i>• When multiple forms of an exam are used each is developed from the test blueprint; however the level of difficulty for each form may vary slightly because different items appear on different forms. Because it would be unfair to require a candidate taking a slightly more difficult form of the exam to answer as many items correctly as a candidate taking an easier form, the statistical procedure known as equating is used to correct for differences in test difficulty. This method maintains the passing score at a scaled score, even though the passing raw score may vary among test forms.

Item	<p>A general term referring to problems and/or questions that appear in assessment instruments and to which candidates must respond. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Item Bank	<p>The system by which test items are maintained, stored, and classified to facilitate item review, item development, and examination assembly. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Job Analysis (See also Practice Analysis, Role Delineation Study)	<p>Any of several methods used singly or in combination to identify the performance domains and associated tasks, knowledge, and/or skills relating to the purpose of the credential and providing the basis for validation. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Licensure	<p>The mandatory process by which a governmental agency grants time-limited permission to an individual to engage in a given occupation after verifying that he/she has met predetermined and standardized criteria, and offers title protection for those who meet the criteria. <i>(The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts, 2005)</i></p>
Performance Domains	<p>The set of organized categories characterizing a role or job under which tasks and associated knowledge and/or skills may be represented in the job/practice analysis. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Practice Analysis	<p>See Job Analysis</p>
Psychometrics	<p>Psychometrics is the science and technology of mental measurement, including psychology, behavioral science, education, statistics, and information technology. <i>(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)</i></p>
Psychometrician	<p>Psychometricians are individuals who are expert in the theory and/or practice of designing, administering, scoring and interpreting the results of tests. They usually have post-graduate qualifications focusing on test theory, applied statistics and/or educational measurement.</p> <p>A professional psychometrician is needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and analyze results of a job analysis or role delineation to define knowledge and/or skill associated with performance

domains and tasks associated with the identified profession.

- Establish examination specifications based on a job analysis or role delineation.
- Select appropriate examination item format to meet measurement goals.
- Facilitate examination development based on examination specifications and item writing principles.
- Facilitate passing standard ('cut score') studies, such that the cut score is consistent with the purpose of the credential and the established standard of competence for the profession.
- Advise on examination administration policies and procedures that are appropriate, standardized, and secure.
- Analyze examination results using appropriate statistical methods.
- Establish scoring and reporting procedures, and ensure the security and confidentiality of such scores and reports.
- Ensure that the reported scores are sufficiently reliable for the intended purpose(s) of the examination.
- Ensure that different forms of an examination assess equivalent content and that candidates are not disadvantaged for taking a form of an examination that varies in difficulty from another form.
- Conduct ongoing research in the areas of reliability and validity.
(The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts, 2005)

Public Member

A representative of the consumers of services provided by a defined certificant population, serving as a voting member on the governing body of a certification program.
(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)

Recertification

Requirements and procedures established as part of a certification program that certificants must meet in order to ensure continuing competence and renew their certification.
(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)

Reliability

The degree to which the scores on an assessment instrument are free of measurement error.
(NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004)

Role Delineation Study

See Job Analysis

Scaled Score

A general term for any of a variety of "transformed" scores; derived from the raw scores through mathematical conversions so that scores from different forms of the same test can be reported on a common scale (or metric) and, therefore, are comparable.

(Certification: A NOCA Handbook, 1996)

- Stakeholders** The various groups with an interest in the quality, governance, and operation of a certification program, such as the public, certificants, candidates, employers, customers, clients, and third party payers.
(*NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004*)
- Test Blueprint** A structured examination content outline with associated area weights (percentage of items on the test).
(*Certification: A NOCA Handbook, 1996*)
- Validity**
- The degree to which accumulated evidence supports specific interpretations of all components of a certification program (e.g., education, experience, and assessment instruments).
(*NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, 2004*)
 - Examination validity would be the degree to which an examination measures what it is intended to measure.
(*Starting a Certification Program, 2nd Edition*)

Sources

Certification: A NOCA Handbook. The National Organization for Competency Assurance, 1996.

NCCA Standards for the Certification of Accreditation Programs. The National Commissioner for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), 2004.

The NOCA Guide to Understanding Credentialing Concepts. The National Organization for Competency Assurance, 2005.

Starting a Certification Program. The National Organization for Competency Assurance, 2nd Edition, 1992.