

Certification Committee Handbook

Thank you for your participation on ABP's Certification Committee. It is your dedication, contribution and hard work that makes certification a success and an important credential to our profession. Your willingness to participate not only strengthens this committee but it strengthens psychoanalysis.

We have put together a Handbook that pulls together the important aspects of participating on this committee. We hope you will find this guide helpful.

Composition of the Committee & Terms

The committee is appointed by the American Board of Psychoanalysis. The Chair of the Certification Committee and the committee members generally serve not more than two consecutive terms of three years each. An effort is made to make the membership of the committee broadly representative.

Meeting Attendance

The ABP Certification Committee convenes Saturday or Sunday through Tuesday at the beginning of the week that coincides with the semi-annual meetings of the APsaA. Interviews are conducted on those days. Meetings tend to run all day and often breakfast and lunch are included. A business meeting is usually scheduled on Tuesday following the review of the applicants. This is an important meeting that provides the space to re-open a continued application as well as an opportunity to review the procedures and research requirements. While we appreciate that committee members work hard during the meetings and are eager to return home attendance at all meetings including the business meeting is required. Travel plans should be made in accordance with this schedule.

How the Certification Committee Functions

The ABP evaluation process consists of two parts, *i.e.*, a review of psychoanalytic work presented in both written and oral form, at the same meeting. The ABP Office will distribute a copy of the application to each member of the committee several weeks before the committee meets. Prior to the meeting and in isolation from the other members of the committee, a primary reviewer and one or two other discussants review each application and prepare a written report. The task of serving as a primary or a secondary reviewer is shared evenly by all committee members. These independent reviewers present their reports orally to the committee at its meeting. All other members of the committee will have become familiar with each application so they can participate in the discussion that follows. Questions about the applicant's work that arise during this part of the procedure can be discussed in person with the applicant at the time of the interview. During the interview, the interviewers have been instructed in their general demeanor, as outlined in the orientation of new examiner guidelines. After the interview, the entire committee reconvenes to discuss the application again. During this final discussion, the interviewers present to the group for discussion their findings from the interview. No decision about the application is made prior to the committee's final review. Following this discussion, the recommendation for certification is voted on by the entire committee via a closed ballot. The Chair of the committee has no vote; in the case of a tie, the decision will be in favor of the applicant. Any member of the committee may "re-open an application" to revisit a continued application before the end of the meeting. This is done when a committee member has had additional thoughts or questions about applications that have elicited mixed conclusions from the

members of the group. It is also automatic to reopen an application if the continued status was determined by one vote. In that situation, an application will be reviewed before the close of the meeting.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, the applications examiners receive are sent only to committee members and the invited Participant Observers. The applications are meant for your use only in preparation for our forthcoming meeting and are to be brought to the meeting.

The Review Procedure

All committee members should be familiar with the Certification Committee's *Standards, Procedures & Guidelines* which can be found on www.abpsa.org. The *Guidelines for Evaluating Applications for Board Certification (Psychoanalytic Competencies)* can be found in Appendix C. This lists the Competencies that the committee relies upon to evaluate the applicants. A copy of the Standards and Appendix C are included with the first mailing of applications to the committee prior to the meeting.

For each first-time applicant, there will be a primary and a secondary reviewer. The rest of the committee needs to be familiar with each application so that the entire committee can participate in the discussion of that application and in the formulation of any questions that arise for the applicant at the interview.

- Initial Discussion: The primary reviewer should take no more than approximately 8 minutes, the secondary no more than 4 minutes. The entire committee adheres to time limits in order to ensure that there is enough time for discussion. It is not necessary to stress details about the patient as much as it is to talk about the work of the analyst (of course, some reference to the details of the case will be important to demonstrate your observations on the process taking place). Reviewers should think of their evaluation in terms of the quality of the work, and also in terms of what more we will need to know from the applicant to help us determine competence as an analyst. Again, the list of psychoanalytic competencies is used as a guide.
- Interview Protocol: The primary and secondary reviewers will be the interview team for the new and continuing applications. Each interview team should take a few minutes before meeting the applicant to think about how they want to approach the interview. Sufficient time should be allotted in the interview so that the questions can be addressed and any clinical material presented can be discussed. It may also be useful to take a 5-10-minute break in the middle of the interview to give the applicant and the team some time by themselves to consider how things are going. There will usually be 15 minutes between the interview and the reconvening of the committee to allow some time for a discussion between the two interviewers prior to the larger group discussion. This also gives the interviewers time to organize their thoughts, and it allows some personal time before the larger group reconvenes.

The Review Procedure of Pre-Graduation Applications

Reviewers of new Pre-Graduation application(s) should prepare an evaluation of their Pre-Graduation application in the same way as the standard first-time applications and the committee should familiarize themselves with the applications for discussion. The pre-graduation Part I applicant does not require a third case of process material to be presented at the interview. The Pre-Graduation application process is in Appendix D of the *Standards, Procedures & Guidelines*.

Continued Applications: Documenting Follow-up Conversations

If an application is continued, then the applicant is appointed a liaison usually the primary or secondary interviewers. The continued applicant is encouraged to contact the liaison to discuss the

outcome in more detail. The liaison must document their follow-up conversations. Please follow the following procedure for documenting your follow-up conversations with continued applicants:

1. Shortly after you speak with the continuing applicant, please write an email documenting your conversation.
2. Please include the application number or the name of the applicant only once so we can easily remove it for duplication to the Certification committee members.
3. Send 1 copy to the ABP Office for the applicant's file and 1 copy to the Chair for his/her records.

Participant Observers

P/O's participate in all committee work during one meeting, observes at least one interview, and following an observation is the secondary interviewer in at least one interview. For more information, please review the Standard's *Appendix E: Selection and Training of Certification Committee Members*.

Orientation of New Examiners

Analysts who have been recommended or selected to be potential members of the Certification Committee will have a discussion with the Chair. At the time of their selection, the Chair will review committee procedures, as outlined in this handbook, and in the Standard's *Appendix E: Selection and Training of Certification Committee Members*. The chair will inform new examiners that before a formal appointment as a member of the Certification Committee, before becoming a primary or secondary observer, they will serve as a Participant Observer. Finally, the Chair will review with them the general guidelines for the interview process, including:

- Neutral Demeanor
- Delivery of feedback or questioning during the interview
- Maintaining the blinded stance of the interviewer
- Fairly managing applicants with different orientations
- Activity level of interviewer
- Management of applicant anxiety
- Handling common dilemmas of an examination interview
- Activity levels of the interviewers

During their experience as a Participant Observer, they will have the opportunity to see firsthand the workings of the committee, of the examination team, and participate in the administration of at least one examination. During this process, new examiners will receive regular feedback from the primary interviewer and the chair that may include determination of their suitability to continue on the committee.

Procedure for Recusals (identifying if an applicant knows a member of the committee)

A current list of the Certification Committee and any scheduled Participant Observers are emailed to the applicants after they have submitted their full application with the following instructions: <If you know the person (even peripherally) or feel that for any reason this person should be excused from reviewing your material kindly email the ABP office by –date- and simply put an X next to the name of the person. As per Appendix F of the *ABP Standards, Procedures and Guidelines*: "The recused committee member or Participant Observer (P/O) will not receive material and will need to leave the room during the committee's discussion. Examination committee members and P/Os are automatically recused from any deliberations, materials, or interviews of applicant(s) from their own (Psychoanalytic) Institute."> The list of recusals is tracked and noted for the applicant on the master list of applicants and followed when assigning interviewers and distributing materials to the committee members.

Recusal of the Chairperson

The Chair will choose a committee member to lead the discussions if he/she needs to be recused from the discussions of an applicant. This committee member will then become responsible for leading the Pre/Post Interview Discussions. Should the applicant be continued, the committee member is responsible for writing the post-meeting letter to the applicant. The ABP office and the primary interviewer assist the committee member with putting the letter together.

Reimbursement Procedure

It is the current policy of the ABP to reimburse one hotel night once a year up to a maximum of \$289.00 per night. Reimbursement forms are available on the website www.abpsa.org/certification. Forms should be completed and returned to ABP within three weeks of the certification committee meetings.

Procedure for Addressing Complaints from Applicants

Upon receiving a complaint or negative feedback from an applicant, the certification committee chair would explore the nature and significance of the complaint. This could include requesting additional information from the applicant, and should include speaking independently with each member of the examination team, including P/O's if they were present, getting a clearer picture of the issue. *The full procedure can be found in ABP's Policies and Procedures Manual.*

Mentors

Once an applicant has committed to apply for certification he or she may request a mentor. The Committee Chair personally selects and asks recent members of the committee to serve as mentors, since they are most familiar with the current functioning of the committee.

Mentors speak with the applicant and read their clinical write-ups for the purpose of helping the applicant fully convey their work and knowledge.

The mentor helps the applicant understand what to expect in their interview and may use the ABP competency criteria as a framework for their assessing their write-ups. The mentor is encouraged to offer a supportive collegial presence and to be mindful of some of the anxiety provoking negative ideas about the certification process that an applicant may bring to the experience.

Mentors are asked to not to convey judgments of the quality of the applicant's work, nor predict the judgments of the committee in this regard. Their task is rather to offer guidance towards enabling the applicant to convey as fully and clearly as possible their analytic work and experience.

At the conclusion of each Certification Examination the chair asks applicants about their mentoring experience in order to be aware of any problems with the process or the performance of individual mentors, and will actively work to understand and address the problem.

Research

The Research & Development Committee is frequently conducting research in order to consider and enhance the reliability of the certification process. The data collection for this research relies to a large extent on survey forms completed by Certification Committee members. Careful and thoughtful completion of the data collection forms is essential to the integrity of the research process.

