

## **Educator Certification Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Because of the importance of Christian education to the total ministry of the church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes persons serving as church educators by certifying them as Christian Educators or by enrolling them as Christian Education Associates. This document serves as a brief overview of requirements and steps of the process but is not meant to replace the Educator Certification Handbook. Please refer to the Handbook for additional information and details ([www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)).

### **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.
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.

### **The ministry of education requires knowledge and skills in the following areas:**

1. Biblical Interpretation
2. Reformed Theology
3. Human Growth & Faith Development
4. Religious Education Theory and Practice
5. Presbyterian Polity
6. Presbyterian Program and Mission
7. Worship and Sacraments

### **Levels of Certification**

Based on the requirements of educator certification, an educator seeking certification may enter the process at one of two appropriate levels, depending upon his or her previous background and/or preparation:

- Certified Christian Educator
- Christian Education Associate

The requirements for each category are:

**Certified Christian Educator.** Persons seeking certification as Christian educators (CCE) must meet one of the following minimum sets of requirements:

#### **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 rubrics related to their content can be found on-line at [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://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. Successful completion of the Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
    - Reformed Theology* - Note the emphasis on "Reformed" theology and the constitution's emphasis on the "Confessions" as a basis for defining Reformed theology. The Educator Certification Committee looks for indications that courses included the Confessions and/or 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* - This area should be current and demonstrate an ability to integrate theory with practice.
    - Worship and Sacraments* – This area includes knowledge of worship and sacraments within the Reformed tradition and the ability to interpret worship and the sacraments in the educational ministry of the church. 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) - 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.
- 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: This area includes knowledge of worship and sacraments within the Reformed tradition and the ability to interpret worship and the sacraments in the educational ministry of the church. 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.

**Christian Education Associate.** Persons seeking enrollment as Christian Education Associates (CEA) must complete the following requirements:

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian educator ministry within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency. \*
- Completion of an online application at <http://educator-certification.pcusa.org> including three letters of reference, a brief biography, transcripts from previous coursework, and a current position description/confirmation of volunteer hours.
- Completion of all four courses of *Opening Doors to Discipleship* ([www.odtd.net](http://www.odtd.net)) to fulfill coursework. CEA candidates will meet with their Certification Advisors after completion of each course to discuss their journals and ways this course informs their educational ministry.
- Reading of six selected books and responding to questions.
  - *The Christian Education Associate Reading List* is sent to each Educator who completes the application for Christian Education Associate. The reading list contains titles including some "classics" and some contemporary titles.
  - *The Christian Education Associate Reading List* consists of two parts. The first part lists eight "foundational" books. Five of these must be selected as required reading. The second part lists recommended readings from which to select books to further educational development. A sixth book is selected by the educator from the second list to complete the reading requirement. The reading lists provide the basic content outline for one's study at this level.
- Verification of gainful employment or volunteer work in Christian Education leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

\* NOTE: 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 30 hours of class interaction, which may be face-to-face or online

There are 3 possible course delivery modes for courses:

- Face-to-face: 30 hours of classroom engagement
- Online: 30 hours of synchronous and/or asynchronous online engagement
- Hybrid: a total of 30 hours, with a mix of face-to-face and online engagement that includes at least 12 hours of scheduled face-to-face interaction

## Overview of the Educator Certification Process

### **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](http://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 who is appointed by the presbytery.
- 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](http://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/convenor 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 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 at least four (4) weeks 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 [certificationexams@pcusa.org](mailto:certificationexams@pcusa.org), to the Coordinator for Certification.
- 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. It should be noted that an exam may be resubmitted to the ECC only once. If a revised exam is still ruled unaccepted by the ECC, the entire exam fails and the educator shall be required to completely rewrite the entire exam, including a new educational design and supporting essays.
- 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

employment” will be provided. There is a three-year limit between completion of certification requirements and verification of employment. 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

### **Steps in the Christian Education Associate Process**

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

#### **Step One — Application**

- A. Educator searches the website [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators) and reviews the informative overview of the certification process and its requirements.
- B. Educator obtains three letters of reference and writes a bio of introduction.
- 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 who is appointed by the presbytery.
- D. Upon application submission, the Coordinator will review the information submitted and verify the requirements already completed while also noting any missing information.
- E. Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the application and sends the Educator the reading list and questions for response along with instructions for submission following completion of educational requirements.
- 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 educational requirements: completion of each course (there are four courses) of *Opening Doors to Discipleship* ([www.odtd.net](http://www.odtd.net)); meet with Certification Advisor to discuss the journal and ways this course informs their educational ministry; submits completion to Coordinator with confirmation by the Advisor.

#### **Step Two — Readings and Responses**

- A. The Educator and Advisor decide which books from the approved list will be most helpful for the Educator's professional growth. The Advisor assists the Educator in locating the books.
- B. The Educator reads the selected books and responds to questions related to the readings.
- C. The Advisor and Educator meet in person or using digital technology to review responses.
- D. The Educator sends the exam responses to [certificationexams@pcusa.org](mailto:certificationexams@pcusa.org).
- E. The Coordinator acknowledges receipt and advises the Educator and Advisor of dates of the next ECC meeting and sends *Verification of Ministry Form* to the Advisor.
- F. The Advisor returns completed *Verification of Ministry Form* to the Coordinator.
- G. The Coordinator sends responses to the readings to two ECC members for evaluation.

**Step Three — Enrollment**

- A. The Educator Certification Committee reviews the reader's evaluations and makes its recommendations:
  - 1. The ECC grants the CEA.
  - 2. The ECC does not grant the CEA due to specific deficiencies in the submitted materials. In the case of termination of position during the process, the ECC may grant the CEA pending future receipt of a current *Verification of Ministry Form*.
- B. If CEA is not recommended, the Coordinator will write to the Educator with a copy to the Advisor, outlining additional work to be completed. The letter will specify how that work is to be submitted for review and subsequent action.
- C. If CEA is recommended, the Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator. Letters are also sent to the Advisor and Clerk of Session or equivalent. A letter and certificate is sent to the Stated Clerk of the Educator's Presbytery.

