



Designation: E 1929 – 98

## Standard Practice for Assessment of Certification Programs for Environmental Professionals: Accreditation Criteria<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E 1929; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ε) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

### 1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers minimum acceptable accreditation criteria to assist in the assessment of certification programs for environmental professionals.

1.2 The practice will assist a user of environmental services in identifying credible certification programs for environmental professionals.

1.3 *This practice does not propose to address any specific certification program for environmental professionals. It is the responsibility of the user of this guide to determine whether or not a specific certification program meets the criteria contained herein.*

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

### 2. Referenced Documents

#### 2.1 CESB Standard:

Guidelines for Engineering and Related Specialty Certification Programs<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.2 NCCA Standard:

Standards for Accreditation of National Certification Organizations<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Terminology

#### 3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *accreditation*—the recognition of a certification program as conforming to certain standards that qualify individuals receiving the certification for practice in a specific area. Accreditation applies to institutions and programs, not individuals.

3.1.2 *certification*—recognition by a body that an individual or entity has met specified criteria and is thereby qualified for a designated function.

3.1.3 *environmental professional*—a person possessing sufficient education, training and experience necessary to qualify for practice in a specialty area of the environmental profession.

3.1.4 *licensing*—the authorization granted by a government to an individual or entity to perform a function or service.

3.1.5 *registration*—the listing of an individual with and by a certifying or licensing body. The body may be either governmental or non-governmental. Registration grants no authority nor does it address qualifications.

3.1.6 *specialty area*—a specified, distinctly identifiable area of practice within a profession.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice may be employed by users of environmental services to assess the credibility of certification programs for environmental professionals.

4.2 Environmental professionals seeking certification may use this practice to assess the credibility of certification programs for environmental professionals.

4.3 Certifying bodies for environmental professionals may use this practice to demonstrate that their specific certification program for environmental professionals meets minimum standards for credibility.

4.4 *This practice is not meant to apply to, replace or otherwise interfere with any existing government licensing board or registration program.*

### 5. Types of Certifying Bodies

5.1 Certifying bodies may be either governmental or non-governmental.

5.2 Governmental bodies such as state licensing boards may have established certification programs to meet their individual requirements, including state laws and programs. This standard is not mandatory for such bodies, however it may be used as a means to improve their programs.

### 6. Structure of Certifying Body

#### 6.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

<sup>1</sup> This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E-50 on Environmental Assessment and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E50.05 on Wetland Ecosystems.

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<sup>2</sup> Available from Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB), 130 Holiday Court, Suite 100, Annapolis, MD 21401-7032.

<sup>3</sup> Available from National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), 1200 19th Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036-2401.

6.1.1 Be independent from sponsoring professional organizations in matters pertaining to certification;

6.1.2 Consist of a majority of certified individuals (new certifying bodies should refer to 8.1.1.7); and

6.1.3 Maintain formal written procedures defining the criteria and process used to select or appoint members to the certifying body.

## 7. Resources of Certifying Body

### 7.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

7.1.1 Possess the expertise, knowledge and skill to implement the certification program.

## 8. Certification Program Operation

### 8.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

8.1.1 Have a program to evaluate individual competence for certification that is objective and based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to function in the specialty area. Such programs shall include the following as minimum criteria:

8.1.1.1 Have a developed document specifying the “minimum level of skills and knowledge” (referred to as the “body of knowledge”) required of a practitioner in the specialty area. The “body of knowledge” document shall be subjected to peer review by practicing professionals in the field of the specialty area. Provision shall be made to update the document to remain current and relevant. Such document shall be made available upon request.

8.1.1.2 Require applicants for certification to meet minimum educational and experience requirements for the specialty area.

8.1.1.3 Require applicants for certification to document education. The certifying body shall verify that minimum educational requirements have been met.

8.1.1.4 Require applicants for certification to supply references supporting relevant experience in the specialty area. References shall be contacted by the certifying body to verify relevant experience.

8.1.1.5 Have a professional code of ethics that applicants requesting certification are provided with and that certificants are required to adhere to in their professional practice.

8.1.1.6 Award certification only if the applicant passes a comprehensive examination based on the requirements of the document specified in 8.1.1.1; and meets all other stipulated certification requirements.

8.1.1.7 New certification programs may grant certification to applicants on the basis of education and demonstrated experience, without examination, for a limited period of time not exceeding approximately two years, provided all other certification requirements are met. After that time, no applicant shall be certified other than by examination.

8.1.1.8 Award certification for a predefined and limited period of time, not exceeding approximately five years, after which recertification shall be required.

8.1.1.9 Establish re-certification requirements.

8.2 Provide any sponsoring professional organization(s), and those who employ or otherwise use environmental services within the specialty area an opportunity for input into the policies of the certifying body;

8.3 Have written mechanisms in place within the organization to re-evaluate on a periodic basis the knowledge, skills, and abilities used to define the specialty area;

8.4 Develop a comprehensive examination designed to test the body of knowledge relevant to the specialty area;

8.5 Take reasonable precautions to protect the integrity of all examinations before, during and after the examination period;

8.6 Have written mechanisms in place to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest, (for example, an applicant and the evaluator shall not be from the same company); and

8.7 Provide a means for differentiating certifications issued after a substantive revision to the certification requirements of the certifying body from those certifications issued prior to the revision.

## 9. Public Disclosure of Certification by Certifying Body

### 9.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

9.1.1 Publish and make publicly available a document that clearly defines the certification responsibilities of the certifying body and outlines any other activities of the certifying body which are not related to certification;

9.1.2 Publish and make publicly available a general description of the procedures used in examination construction and validation, administration, and results reporting;

9.1.3 Publish and make publicly available a comprehensive summary of the information, knowledge, or functions covered by any examination required; and

9.1.4 Publish and make publicly available, at least annually, a summary of certification activities, including number of applicants, and number and names of those certified.

## 10. Certifying Body Responsibilities to Applicants

### 10.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

10.1.1 Not give preferential or prejudicial treatment to any applicant;

10.1.2 Provide all applicants with written copies of procedures to apply for and attain certification;

10.1.3 Maintain a written policy for the periodic review of application and testing procedures to ensure consistency and equitableness;

10.1.4 Report examination results to applicants in a timely manner;

10.1.5 Provide, upon request, to all applicants who fail the examination or fail to meet the requirements of the certification, a written response indicating the general areas of deficiency;

10.1.6 Consider and treat the specific and detailed examination results of each applicant as confidential; and

10.1.7 Publish and maintain a written policy detailing appeal procedures.

## 11. Certifying Body Responsibilities to the Public and Consumers

### 11.1 *The Certifying Body Shall:*

11.1.1 Ensure that the examination measures the knowledge, skill, and abilities required for practice in the specialty area;

