

# USD(I) ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION INITIATIVE

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### General Questions

#### **What is the rationale behind the DoD Instruction 3305 Series?**

This series was developed for each DoD Intelligence Community functional manager to address the training and education needs of the DoD Intelligence Community and to establish the respective Training Councils. The series charges the DoD functional manager and the Training Councils with defining the respective DoD Intelligence Community workforce training standards.

#### **What is the Purpose for DoD 3305-Manual Series?**

The Manual codifies the requirements and procedures involved for certification programs with regards to both personnel and education & training institutions in the DoD Intelligence Community. The DoD 3305-Manuals are tied to the respective DoD Instruction (DODI) 3305 for each functional manager. Following the DoDI 3305 Series, the 3305-M series addresses defining the work and worker knowledge and skills for each respective DoD community within the DoD IC, establishing procedures for the DoD functional manager, training council, components, agencies, and organizations in the development, implementation, and maintenance of a certification program.

#### **What is the difference between USD(I) sponsored certification programs and other DoD certification programs?**

USD(I) policy called out in the DoD 3305 Manual requires certification programs be developed to meet recognized national accreditation standards. USD(I) sponsored certification programs are required to have the following characteristics:

- **Function-Focused:** USD(I) approved certification programs will be based on the requirements developed under the respective DoDI 3305 series. The unit of the analysis is on the functions of work, not the occupational titles or specific jobs.
- **High Stakes:** Certification(s) will have an assessment instrument(s) that are high stakes, legally defensible and certify the individual.
- **Assessment Strategies:** Certification(s) will be aligned with Intelligence Community Directive 652 for assessment strategies.

### **How is the certification adaptable to the constant changes in the profession?**

A skill standard, or function-focused role delineation which is the underlying content of a certification, is detailed to the level that when content changes, certifications can adapt. The unit of detail can easily be extracted, modified and re-inserted into the certification. The modularity of the workforce skill standard data is critical in determining when and to what extent change truly impacts the skill standard and applicable certification.

### **What is the expectation on costs?**

Certification development has a cost. Efficiencies are gained when INTs begin to share the results of common content that can then be adapted/adopted by others. The Components and Agencies already are committed to training. As certifications are put into place, training assignment and the dollars associated are better aligned to critical needs. Elimination of training redundancy, providing the right level of training, providing a pre-assessment to target training - all are efficiencies resulting from effective certification development.

### **What DoD Objectives do the USD(I) Sponsored Certification Effort Support?**

- The National Intelligence Strategy  
"Integrated" and "Agile" are key characteristics used to measure the IC effectiveness. In order to "create an integrated community that can reap synergies within capabilities" and "operate as a single integrated team, employing collaborative teams that leverage the full range of IC capabilities to meet the requirements of our users, from the President to deployed military units," each team clearly must understand what individuals can do and need to be able to do to effectively collaborate.  
*Excerpts from 2009 NIS, National Intelligence Strategy (August 2009)*
- The National Intelligence Human Capital Strategy  
Certification is a mechanism to achieving the goal of "a professional and fully integrated and seamless Enterprise, providing the best intelligence, counterintelligence, and security under any condition or circumstance, whenever and wherever, in support of the war fighter and the Nation." Certification means a certified individual can be assigned to a mission, with the confidence that the team knows what that individual can accomplish in their INT-specific assignment.
- The Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative 8  
Expand Cyber Education: Today, the United States does not have a sufficient cadre of cybersecurity experts, nor an established cybersecurity career path for cybersecurity experts. The initiative plans to construct a comprehensive Federal cyber education and training program, with instruction including offensive and defensive skills and capabilities. How?  
Under DoDI 3305.09 DoD Cryptologic Training and proposed DoD

Manual 3305.09, the Director of NSA (in role as Commander of CYBERCOM) would be able to define desired career paths for cybersecurity and experts that would highlight the necessary knowledge, skills sets, and abilities then codify the necessary assessments to certify at four levels of proficiency (IAW ICD 652).

### **Certification Questions**

#### **Who has the authority to approve the implementation of certification programs within an agency?**

USD(I) sponsored certification programs require each respective component, agency, or organization with a workforce defined by the respective DoDI 3305 series to submit an implementation plan to the respective training council. The entire DoD IC workforce, including contractors, shall be included in the respective implementation plan. The respective training councils established under 3305 Manuals shall approve all implementation plans. These plans will be reported on an annual basis to the DoD functional manager. The head of an agency or designee has the responsibility to develop the implementation plan.

#### **What is the difference between a certification program and a certificate program?**

A certification program involves a process in which individuals attain and demonstrate the level of knowledge and skill required to perform in the profession, occupation, or role. (i.e.; Certified Public Accountant) A certification program generally focuses on experience and current skills and knowledge. Following attainment of a certification, individuals are generally expected to possess the knowledge, skill, and experience level necessary to perform successfully in the occupation or role identified. Certification is a process by which individuals are assessed against pre-determined standards for knowledge, skills, and competencies and granted a time-limited credential. Accredited certification programs also require certificants to maintain their credential status with appropriate professional development and continuous learning activities.

A certificate program is a training program established or purchased by an agency to provide structured training course(s) to employees to meet an identified performance and developmental need. Certificate programs award certificates after a course of study has been completed and does not generally require previous work experience or exhibited skill level. The certificate documents completion of the training. Successful completion of an end-of-program assessment is not generally a requirement for obtaining the certificate.

**When should an agency develop or make use of a certification program?**

An agency should consider a certification program when its workforce analysis indicates that there is a need for a demonstrated level of competence in a particular field of interest or discipline. A certification demonstrates explicitly that the individual possesses the knowledge, skills, abilities, or competencies required to perform the work at a satisfactory level.

**What should agencies consider when developing a certification program?**

Agencies should develop standards/criteria for implementation that strategically address specific workforce needs and goals. Before implementation, agencies should establish internal administrative policies for the certification program to assure equity, fairness, and certainty. Also, if a certification is a condition of employment, this information must be included in the vacancy announcement as well as all other appropriate documents. Other things to consider include:

- How will use of a certification program enhance agency long-range strategic goals?
- How can use of a certification program assist in accomplishing specific human capital goals such as effective succession planning, recruitment, retention, staffing, enterprise assignments, and performance planning?
- What is the agency's desired outcome?
- How will the agency determine the desired outcome has been achieved?
- What are the budget implications?
- How will the agency monitor use to preclude misuse and fraudulent credentials?
- How will the agency determine acceptability/validity of certification programs used?
- What employee and labor relation issues may arise because of the certification program?

**How will agencies determine which employees participate in certification programs?**

The determination will be made by the agencies as they implement the criteria and strategy defined in the overall certification program. The criteria will be established in the policy decisions of the respective community training councils. Agencies should also consult with their Office of General Counsel regarding the establishment of selection criteria, as well as, the existence of any collective bargaining obligations and other contract requirements.

**How will agencies determine which jobs/series are appropriate for the development of a certification program?**

Each agency has the discretion to determine (based on its mission, strategic goals, and objectives) those job/series that meet the DoD certification program requirements.

**How will agencies track professional credentials and will there be any record-keeping requirements?**

Agencies should maintain records that accurately reflect the status of the workforce as it pertains to eligibility, certification status, and achieved certifications. Recordkeeping for assessment of the effectiveness of the program, and agency impact, will be included in an annual report on certification and accreditation efforts to the respective training council.

**For the DoD Functional Manager and/or respective training council, are there additional criteria to consider when developing a certification program to address the needs of the agency?**

- Do the certification requirements and assessments adhere to the Uniform Guidelines? (<http://www.uniformguidelines.com>)
- Are certification requirements and assessment tools supported by professional job analysis and validated by their internal work force?
- Does the purpose of the certification program link to the identified workforce needs of the agency?
- What are the program eligibility criteria and application policies and procedures?
- Do all examination processes and procedures link clearly to the desired proficiency level?
- Does the assessment take into consideration the population when determining the delivery method?
- Is there a detailed listing and/or outline of the performance domains, tasks, and associated knowledge and/or skills for each certification?
- Does the certification program examination measure the knowledge, skills, abilities or competencies of the expected level of performance of the employee being certified?
- How will the certification renewal process requirement be established and maintained?
- Does the program have discipline, nondiscrimination, and confidentiality policies and procedures?
- Are there appeals policies and procedures to address grievances and unfair labor practices?

This is not an exhaustive list. For further assistance in determining the design and validity of a certification programs, contact USD(I) Human Capital Management Office.

**Can a certification organization offer educational programs?**

A certification organization can offer educational materials for prospective candidates as long as the organization/agency-sponsored education is not a required prerequisite to obtain the credential. Other methods of

certification preparation are often available. The certification organization should not say or imply that taking the education or training (especially a review course) will help the individual to pass the test or will guarantee any particular score. If other prep courses, education, reference materials, etc. are available, the certification organization should also note this.

### ***Accreditation Questions***

#### **What is the difference between accreditation of an institution and accreditation of a certification program?**

Accreditation is a status granted to an institution or certification program that has been found to meet stated criteria of quality. Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to assure the quality of the institution or certification program, and to assist in the improvement of the institution or certification program.

Institutional Accreditation must be achieved by meeting the published standards and the associated criteria of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency, such as the Council on Occupational Education (COE).

Accreditation of certification programs must be achieved by meeting the published standards of nationally recognized certification accreditation bodies, such as the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

#### **What does it mean for education and training institutions to be accredited?**

Following the lead of DoDI 1430.17 that assigns responsibilities for academic quality and cost effectiveness of training, the DoDM 3305 requires USD(I) be responsible for ensuring DoD security education and training institutions are in compliance.

#### **Additional Resource Information can be found:**

Memorandum for Chief Human Capital Officers, "Fact Sheet on Certification and Certificate Programs," August 13, 2008

NCCA - National Commission for Certifying Agencies - Website:  
<http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/>