

# **CERTIFICATION—**

## **Are Your Credentials in Order?**

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During last year's meeting of the Committee on Credentials of the American Board for Certification 111 Applications for Examination were reviewed. The Committee rejected 50 of these. Because of this high percentage of rejection, the Board and the Committee felt that the process of handling these Applications should be printed where it would be accessible to those desiring Certification.

Applications for Examination should be submitted no later than June 1st of the year in which Certification is desired. A fee of \$10.00 must accompany each new Application. A late Application will be considered if accompanied by an additional \$10.00 late Application Fee and received before June 16th. Application Fees are used to meet the expense of handling the Applications and are *not returnable*.

When an Application is received by the National Office it is reviewed by the Executive Director of the American Board for Certification. If deficiencies are noted he will notify the applicant by letter. We must stress that it is the *responsibility of the applicant* to see that his Application is filled out completely. Most common deficiencies are: no Application Fee; no High School Diploma; lack of adequate fitting experience; lack of first fitting dates for each type of appliance. When there are irregularities from the general requirements the applicant should explain in detail. This is especially true when experience time is short or when there are some unusual circumstances regarding education or fitting.

After June 1st reference forms are mailed to the physicians, the fitting supervisors and the former employers listed in the Application. The first of July follow-up letters are written to those references who have not returned their forms. (It is our suggestion that the Applicant contact the physicians and other references to be sure that they have returned their forms on time.) At this same time a list of the Applicants is mailed to all Certifees to give them an opportunity to comment.

When completed and documented, the Applications are referred to the Committee on Credentials which usually meets early in August. This is a standing committee of the Board, appointed by the president. The members consist of from 2 to 4 Certified Orthotists and Prosthetists and one physician. The Chairman of the Committee is a member or past member of the Board. The duties of the Committee are to pass on the eligibility of all Applicants for Certification Examinations and to review and recommend action on appeals made by those failing the Examinations.

When the Committee meets, the Applications are reviewed individually by each member of the Committee. The Executive Director is present to answer questions pertaining to his previous review of the applications. After the Committee has evaluated each Application individually, each is discussed by the entire Committee. No Applicant is rejected unless it is the *unanimous decision* of the Committee.

The importance of filling out the Application for Examination completely and correctly cannot be overemphasized. Many Applications are received which give the impression that the Applicant fills out what he feels is important and sends it in expecting the Committee to have some magical insight as to what the rest of his qualifications are. An explanation should be made if any blanks are not filled in. Interpretation of material in credentials is a matter of weighing the factors of time, training, experience and references. Lack of information in any one of these categories may make the difference between acceptance or rejection. The forms list minimum requirements. Additional information given by the applicant may very well work to his advantage.

The Applicant must furnish proof that he has completed a High School Course. Until June 16, 1962 a High School Equivalency Certificate may be presented in lieu of a diploma or certificate of completion. Each year several Applicants ignore or neglect to include this requirement with their Application. It is then necessary for our Executive Director to request that this requirement be met before the Committee meeting. In two cases this past year Diplomas or Equivalency certificates were never received. It is important to note here that high school diplomas given by correspondence schools are not considered equivalency certificates but are considered the same as a high school certificate. (see foot note)

All College, University and other short- or long-term residence courses are valuable aids in determining eligibility. Correspondence courses and seminars at National and Regional A.O.P.A. meetings should be listed. At present the courses in prosthetics and orthotics at UCLA, NYU, and NU are not required for Certification, but they do carry considerable weight, especially in borderline cases. Methods of fitting as taught at these Universities have been accepted throughout the United States. The examinations are based on much of the material they teach. Anyone not familiar with the material in these courses would have difficulty passing the examination.

Any applicant who has completed his course of study equivalent to High School in a non-English speaking school is required to submit evidence of his ability to speak, read and write English. This is necessary because in the past men have failed in the examination not because of their lack of knowledge or technical competence in Prosthetics and Orthotics, but because they could not understand the questions asked and, therefore, could not show what they actually knew. The Committee requires that these Applicants submit profiles of scores on the "General Education Development Tests" and the "Nelson-Denny Reading Tests for Colleges or Senior High Schools" (form A or B). Arrangements for taking these tests should be made locally through the Superintendent of Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation Office, University Counseling Service or Veterans Testing Service. Our Executive Director can be contacted for assistance in obtaining these tests.

The responsibility for interpretation of references with regards to character and integrity rests heavily with the Credentials Committee. There is no examination to further test the Applicant concerning his ethical and professional attitude. The decision must be based on references submitted by past employers, physicians and personal acquaintance. One poor reference is seldom sufficient for rejection. If only one individual expresses a poor opinion of the Applicant and all the rest are very favorable there is still a very good chance for him to be accepted. Some Applicants have

Footnote: The International Correspondence Schools through their local representatives will gladly review previous education of an individual and set up a program for him to pursue in completing this diploma.



blamed former employers for poor references that caused their rejection. The former employer may have been one deciding factor but those that have been rejected had other poor references, either from Certifees or physicians or did not meet other requirements of the Board. In order to be as fair as possible the Board and the Committee never closes the door to anyone whose Credentials have not been approved. If an Applicant can furnish sufficient proof as to his good character and integrity he should certainly re-apply. It is the responsibility of Certifees and physicians to give a true account of the Applicant's present conduct. Un-ethical practices in the past could be overshadowed by good professional conduct at present. In order to clarify some difficult cases the Committee may request additional references from other individuals who know the Applicant. The decision is based on all reference letters combined with education and experience. We cannot divulge the name of anyone who may have given a good or a bad reference, but we do inform the Applicant, on request, of the categories in which he was weak so that he may prepare himself for re-Application.

The Applicant must obtain permission from the physician whose name he sends in to be contacted by the Board. In several cases we received reference forms from physicians stating that they did not know the man; or, equally as bad, "His employer says he is a good man but I haven't met him". These answers do not help the Applicant.

Last year many Applicants were rejected because they fell short of the two year requirement for fitting all types of appliances under a Certified supervisor. This requirement is especially adhered to for those entering the field during the last four years. Those who have been in the field prior to four years ago can be approved for Certification if their fittings have been supervised either by a person now Certified, a physician, or a person who has sufficient experience and background to offer this supervision. It is very important that all Applicants for Examination record 1st fitting dates of various appliances. To assist in this a person who desires Certification should notify our Executive Director of his intent to be Certified early during his training. Information concerning educational material, formal courses available and Applications will be mailed to him. The Application can be used as a work progress form. Anyone who obviously has specialized in one type of prosthetic or orthotic appliance and has not had courses of study or experience in others will not be accepted. His rejection is necessary not only because of the requirements of the Board but also because it would be unfair to him if he were allowed to attempt an examination which he, by experience, was not prepared to pass.

From this discussion we sincerely hope that future Applicants will have a better understanding of what is expected of them. An Applicant who realizes what a professional career requires is not a problem for the Committee on Credentials. He is the one who has taken all the educational courses available. His shop and fitting experience is not minimum but more than required, and his references show that he has made a special effort to personally contact the physician whose patient he is fitting. This man submits his Application after he is sure that he is able to fulfill all the requirements. He realizes that his career is his own individual responsibility and not the responsibility of his employer. He wants to be Certified because he knows he is qualified to give professional service and not for what he can get out of it. He realizes that Certification is merely the end of the beginning and not an end in itself. He is the man who is professional and who should be Certified. He is the man who will be accepted by the Committee on Credentials.