



Standard Terminology for Personnel Credentialing¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This terminology defines terms related to the credentialing of persons. These terms are offered to enable the development of future ASTM documents relating to personnel certificate and certification programs. The source document for each definition is cited when an appropriate document is available. Many definitions are the product of the committee that compiled this terminology, and as such, are the result of the collected knowledge and experience of the committee members.

1.1.1 Since credentialing of persons is being carried out by many different bodies in many career fields, usage of descriptive terms can vary. There is no attempt to include all credentialing terms in this terminology. Rather, this terminology contains those terms most commonly encountered in the credentialing process.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- D4538 Terminology Relating to Protective Coating and Lining Work for Power Generation Facilities
- E1187 Terminology Relating to Conformity Assessment (Withdrawn 2006)³
- E1424 Test Method for Determining the Rate of Air Leakage Through Exterior Windows, Curtain Walls, and Doors Under Specified Pressure and Temperature Differences Across the Specimen
- E1480 Terminology of Facility Management (Building-Related)
- E1605 Terminology Relating to Lead in Buildings
- E1732 Terminology Relating to Forensic Science
- E1986 Guide for Information Access Privileges to Health Information

- E2135 Terminology for Property and Asset Management
- E2159 Guide for Selection, Assignment, and Monitoring of Persons To Be Utilized as Assessors/Auditors or Technical Experts
- E2161 Terminology Relating to Performance Validation in Thermal Analysis
- E2659 Practice for Certificate Programs

2.2 Other Standards:

- ANSI/ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies, 2004⁴
- ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons, 2003⁴
- ASAE Certification and Accreditation Law Handbook, Second Edition, 2004⁵
- ISO/IEC 17000 Conformity Assessment—Vocabulary and General Principles, 2004⁶
- ICE Basic Guide to Credentialing Terminology, 2006⁷

3. Definitions

- access/access to a system or scheme**—opportunity for an applicant to obtain conformity assessment under the rules of the system or scheme. **ISO/IEC 17000**
- accommodation**—a reasonable modification in an assessment instrument or its administration made to compensate for the effects of a qualified disability without altering the purpose of the assessment instrument. **ISO/IEC 17000 and ICE**
- accountability**—the responsibility of a governing board, committee, or other sponsor of a credentialing program to demonstrate the efficacy and fairness of policies, procedures, and assessment instruments to its stakeholders. **ICE**
- acts**—statutes set by a governmental body.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

⁴ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

⁵ Available from American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), 1575 I St. NW, Washington, DC 20005, <http://www.asaecenter.org>.

⁶ Available from International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, Case postale 56, CH-1211, Geneva 20, Switzerland, <http://www.iso.ch>.

⁷ Available from Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), 2025 M Street, N.W. Suite 800 Washington, DC 20036, <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org>.

administration—the process by which a person or group oversees a process governed by a specific set of rules or procedures to ensure proper adherence to those rules or procedures.

adverse action or decision—an action or decision signifying opposition.

DISCUSSION—Adverse decisions include:

- (1) Refusal to accept an application,
- (2) Refusal to proceed with an assessment,
- (3) Refusal to grant a credential,
- (4) Any other action that impedes the attainment of a credential, and
- (5) Revoking a credential.

adverse impact—a significantly higher failure rate for candidates in legally ‘protected classes’ of people, such as females, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans.

agreement—a document that sets forth the terms of an arrangement and to which the parties in the arrangement are signatories.

agreement group—bodies that are signatories to the agreement on which an arrangement is based. **ISO/IEC 17000**

appeal—request by an applicant, candidate, certificant, or license holder for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the credentialing body related to her or his desired status. **ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024**

applicant—an individual declaring interest in earning a credential offered by a program, usually through a request for information and the submission of materials. **ICE**

assessment instruments—any one of several standardized methods or tools for determining if individuals possess the necessary knowledge or skill, or both, related to the purpose of the credential. **ICE**

assessment of conformity—a process whereby an individual’s knowledge, experience, and skills are evaluated or measured against a standard.

DISCUSSION—Activities associated with conformity assessment include testing, certification, accreditation, and quality assurance system registration.

assessor—an individual who has the knowledge, experience and skills necessary to perform a comprehensive assessment of another body, which includes assessment of the quality management system, policies and procedures, etc. **E2159**

DISCUSSION—An assessor/auditor should be fully qualified in the performance of a full assessment/audit, with the exception of evaluating specific technical areas. An assessor may also be qualified as a technical expert and bring such additional skills to the assessment/audit.

attestation—issuance of a statement, based on a decision following a review, that fulfillment of specified requirements has been demonstrated. **ISO/IEC 17000**

scope of attestation—range of characteristics of conformity assessment covered by attestation. **ISO/IEC 17000**

authority—a body that has legal powers and rights. **E1187**

autonomy—organizational control over all essential credentialing decisions without being subject to approval by or undue influence from any other body. **ICE**

board/regulatory board—the authority responsible for preparing/developing and adopting regulations, policies, processes, and procedures to carry out the regulation; judging whether an individual or entity has met and continues to meet regulatory requirements; and recognizing the individual (certificant or license holder) or body (certification or licensure) as doing so.

candidate—an applicant who has fulfilled specified prerequisites, establishing eligibility to participate in the credentialing process. **ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024**

certificant—an individual who has earned a credential awarded through a certification program. **ICE**

certificate—a document (letter, card, or other medium) awarded to certificate holders that designates the successful completion of a credentialing program’s requisites. **E2659**

certificate holder—an individual who has been issued a certificate after successfully completing a credentialing program’s requisites. **E2659**

certificate of attendance/certificate of participation—a document issued after an individual attends or participates in a particular meeting or course. **ICE**

DISCUSSION—Typically, there is no knowledge assessed prior to issuing this type of document. A certificate of attendance or participation is not a credential, because the recipients are not required to demonstrate competence through assessment or meet agreed upon professional or trade standards.

certificate program—a nondegree-granting education or training program consisting of (1) a learning event or series of events designed to educate or train individuals to achieve specified learning outcomes within a defined scope, and (2) a system designed to ensure individuals receive a certificate only after verification of successful completion of all program requisites, including but not limited to an evaluation of learner attainment of intended learning outcomes. **E2659**

certification—procedure and action by a duly authorized body of determining, verifying, and attesting in writing to the qualifications of individuals, processes, procedures, or items in accordance with applicable requirements. **E1424**

professional certification—procedure and action by a duly authorized body of determining, verifying, and attesting in writing to the qualifications of individuals in a profession, in accordance with applicable requirements associated with that profession.

certification agency—the organizational or administrative unit that offers or operates, or both, a certification program. **ICE**

certification board—a group of individuals appointed or elected to govern one or more certification programs, as well as the certification agency, and responsible for all certification decision making, including governance. **ICE**

certification body/entity—a body that conducts certifications of conformity. **E1187**

certification mark—the symbol and use thereof which has been authorized by a certification body.

certification process—all activities by which a certification body establishes that an individual fulfills specified requirements, including application, evaluation, decision on certification, surveillance, and recertification.

ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024

certification program—the standards, policies, procedures, assessment instruments, and related products and activities through which individuals are publicly identified as qualified in a profession, occupation, role, or skill. **ICE**

committee/certification committee—a group of individuals appointed or elected to recommend and implement policy related to certification program operations. **ICE**

complaint—expression of dissatisfaction below the level of an appeal by any individual or organization to a credentialing body, relating to the activities of that body to which a response is expected.

computer-based testing (CBT)—use of computers to deliver assessments, and sometimes the scoring and reporting of these assessments.

conflict of interest—a conflict between the private interests and the official or professional responsibilities of an individual in a position of influence and trust.

confidentiality—the property that information is not made available or disclosed to unauthorized individuals, entities, or processes. **E1986**

conformity assessment—demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person, or body are fulfilled. **ISO/IEC 17000**

third-party conformity assessment—for purposes of the certification of persons, a conformity assessment activity that is performed by a person or body independent of the person or organization being assessed. **ISO/IEC 17000**

conformity assessment system—procedures and management for carrying out conformity assessment. **ISO/IEC 17000**

conformity surveillance—evaluation of conformity to determine the continuing conformity with specified requirements. **E1187**

consensus—general agreement or accord on a matter that all can support; a majority of opinion, but not necessarily unanimity.

consensus process—a formal procedure for reaching general agreement or accord, which includes the elements of due process.

constructed-response question—a type of test item in which the candidate produces the answer (for example, an essay or a fill in the blank) rather than selecting from multiple-choice options.

consultancy—participation in any of the activities of a conformity assessment body (CAB) subject to accreditation. **ANSI/ISO/IEC 17011**

DISCUSSION—Examples include:

(1) Preparing or producing manuals or procedures for a CAB;

(2) Participating in the operation or management of the system of a CAB;

(3) Giving specific advice or specific training towards the development and implementation of the management system or competence of a CAB, or both; and

(4) Giving specific advice or specific training for the development and implementation of the operational procedures of a CAB.

content domains—the set of organized categories characterizing subject matter under which knowledge and skills may be represented in specifications for assessment instruments. **ICE**

continuing competence—the ability to provide service at specified levels of knowledge and skill, not only at the time of initial certification/licensure but throughout an individual's professional career. **ICE**

continuing education—activities, often short courses, that certified or licensed professionals engage in to receive credit for the purpose of maintaining continuing competence and renewing certification or licensure. **ICE**

credentialing—the process by which an entity authorized and qualified to do so, grants formal recognition to, or records the recognition status of individuals, organizations, institutions, programs, processes, services, or products that meet predetermined and standardized criteria. **ASAE**

credentialing (licensing) authority—an entity authorized and qualified to do so, that grants formal recognition to, or records the recognition status of individuals, organizations, institutions, programs, processes, services, or products that meet predetermined and standardized criteria. **ASAE**

credentialing process—a method for maintaining quality standards of knowledge and performance, and in some cases, for stimulating continued self-improvement. **ICE**

criterion-referenced standard—a pass-fail standard determined by characteristics of the test (for example, the difficulty) rather than characteristics of the candidates (for example, the ability).

decertify/decertification—to withdraw certification from an individual.

designation—the title or trademarked label applied to the achievement of a credential. **ISO/IEC 17000**

discipline/disciplinary action—a formal, published process for the enforcement of standards governing the professional behavior (that is, ethics, standards of practice) of certificants or licensees. **ICE**

document—(1) *v*, to confirm (usually in writing) that a document is genuine;
(2) *v*, to bear witness that someone actually signed a document, such as a will;
(3) *n*, documentation as evidence such as policies and procedures, test reports, etc.

due process—a fundamental principle of fairness in all legal matters, both civil and criminal, especially in the courts.