



CERTIFICATION COUNCIL HANDBOOK

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Association for Experiential Education

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I. The Certification Program

About AEE

In 2020, the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) responded to a need by developing a certification process for Adventure Therapists.

The purpose of the Certification Program is to advance the professional practices of professionals offering adventure therapy to individuals, families, and groups.

Attaining certification status through the AEE Certification Program is solid evidence of a therapist's commitment to quality and safety, belief in professional standards, and allocation of resources toward continued excellence and improvement.

Goals

The primary goals of the Certification Council are to:

1. To maintain high levels of competence in the field that can help safeguard high standards of physical and emotional safety, as well as rigorous risk management strategies.
2. To increase practitioner professionalism in Adventure Therapy.
3. To develop, review, and regularly revise core elements of Adventure Therapy based on the current research and practice trends.

Overview

The Certification process is designed and managed by the Director of Standards Development and Certification (Director) and the Certification Council (Council), and includes the following steps:



- 1) The Adventure Therapy Certification process begins with a candidate's submission of the CCAT application to the Director who will track candidates progress through the certification process. The Director contacts the candidate within seven days of receiving it to inform them that their application is being reviewed.
- 2) The Director assigns the application to a member of the Council who will review the candidate's application and contact the candidate within seven days of receiving it, to let them know that required items are missing, or that their application is complete and will be reviewed at the next Council meeting. The Council member completes the CCAT Candidate Assessment Form when the application is complete and sends it to the Director at least seven days before the next Council meeting.
- 3) The Council will meet monthly to review Candidate Assessment Forms. The Council will review and vote on each candidate regarding whether certification will be awarded, tabled because additional information about the candidate is requested by the Council before a decision can be reached, or denied. The Director does not have a vote but may express an opinion. Council decisions are made by a simple majority of those attending a meeting. For a vote to take place, two-thirds of the Council must be present.
- 4) The Director will notify candidates of the status of their application within seven days of the Council meeting.

The Director will:

- a) Send official notification to the candidate about the candidate's awarded certification; or
- b) Send official notification to the candidate about the candidate's denial of certification with clarifying information about the decision; or
- c) Update the candidate about the status of the application if the Council requests more information about the candidate.

- 5) If a candidate is not awarded Adventure Therapy Certification, the candidate can reapply after six months to correct and/or address deficiencies in the application. The candidate's primary contact throughout that process remains the director.
- 6) To remain in good standing, a Certified Clinical Adventure Therapist must pay the yearly fee and send evidence of 18 adventure therapy-specific CEs every 36 months.

II. Certification Program - Roles and Responsibilities

Director of Accreditation and Certification

The AEE Certification Program is designed and managed by the Director and the Council.

The Director has primary responsibility for all operational aspects of AEE's Certification Program, including developing strategies for the growth and success of the program.

Summary of Responsibilities

- Manage all aspects of the AEE Certification Program, including planning, budgeting, reporting, delivering service, following up on Certification Council actions, and evaluating all aspects of the program.
- Ex-officio, non-voting member of the AEE Certification Council.
- Recruit, train, and supervise all Certification Program volunteers. Train and support Certification Council members with their work on the Council.
- Develop and grow public awareness about AEE Certifications and the value of Certifications outside of AEE.
- Develop certified member retention plans and goals.
- Develop certified member recruitment plans and goals.
- Supervise project staff (paid and/or volunteer) and delegate tasks accordingly.
- File and keep records and data as required.
- Orient and provide training for new Council members.
- Keep abreast of advancements in the field.

Certification Council

Purpose

To design, promote, monitor, and evaluate the Certification Program in cooperation with the Director.

Summary of Responsibilities

- Set policy and procedures for the Certification Program.
- Develop, adopt, maintain, evaluate, and revise Certification Program criteria.

- Grant or deny certification status in accordance with Certification Program policy.
- Facilitate the development of educational materials related to the Certification Program.
- Periodically assess the success of the program and revise it as necessary to achieve its mission.

Liability

All Council members and designated committees therein, while performing their duties as specified here, are considered officers of AEE and therefore are included in the Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance Policy for the Association.

III. Council - Membership and Structure

Membership

- The Council consists of at least five voting members.
- It is preferred that there be at least one Council member that is a current member of the TAPG Leadership Council. If this is not possible, a member of the Council will be charged with liaising with the TAPG Leadership Council.
- The Council may have additional advisors who are non-voting members for committee work.
- The Director is a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Council and all committees.
- Council members are elected for a term of three years and may serve up to three consecutive terms. After being off the Council for a full year, a past Council member may be nominated to reapply for the Certification Council as a new member.
- Terms begin upon election by the Council and conclude at the end of the annual conference. (Exceptions may be made to maintain consistency in program relationships (i.e., complete reviewer process)).

Officers

Officers of the Council are the Chair, Past Chair, and Secretary. The officers are elected by the Council at its January meeting for a two-year term beginning at the end of the January meeting (or January 31) if there is no January meeting. Officers can serve up to two consecutive terms.

Nominations Process: Nominations for officers are solicited by the Director before the January meeting of the Certification Council. Council members may nominate themselves or other members of the Council for the officer positions.

Voting Process: Votes are cast by secret ballot and counted by at least two members of the Council

Duties of "The Chair"

- Preside over Council meetings.
- Appoint all temporary or permanent committee chairs and members.
- Serve as an ex-officio member of Council standing committees and ad hoc working groups.
- Work with Council members on performance issues around attending meetings, being a collaborative member, and doing assigned work.
- Serve as the principal spokesperson for the Council.
- Liaisons with TAPG if there is no TAPG representative on the Council
- Assists the Director with the application process as needed

Duties of "The Past Chair"

- Assist the Chair in learning the duties of the Chair role as requested.
- Become Acting Chair of the Council, with all the rights, privileges, and powers as if the duly elected Chair, in the event of the absence or inability of the Chair to exercise the office.
- If the current Past Chair is not available, then the most recent Chair (currently on the council) will fulfill this role.

Duties of "The Secretary"

- Document, manage, and facilitate the dissemination of minutes, actions, and other documents as appropriate.
- Serve as Chair when the current Chair and Past Chair are unavailable. There should be a secretary-elect so that they can learn the roles to take over and cover if necessary.

Meetings

- The Council meets as often as it deems necessary to conduct the Council business (usually monthly).
- The Council holds in-person gatherings annually. The meetings are scheduled with the AEE International Conference (fall).
- Teleconference meetings are scheduled as needed, usually monthly.

See Section VI Council Meeting Protocols below.

Committees

As the Certification Council matures, standing committees may be formed.

Ad Hoc Committees

- The Chair may appoint ad hoc committees as the need arises. These ad hoc committees disband after their charge is completed.
- Ad hoc committees will be chaired by Council members and may include persons not on the Council who have the necessary expertise needed on the committee.

Recruitment and Removal of Council Members

Recruitment

1. The Council facilitates the recruitment of new Council members.
2. Applications are solicited from the general public and the AEE membership through means deemed appropriate by the Council.
3. Interested applicants are sent the AEE Certification Council job description and other relevant documents.
4. Interested applicants are asked to complete the Certification Council Application.
5. The Council members review applications and vote to approve new members.

Council Vacancies

- If possible, Council members not pursuing an additional term will let the Chair know six months before their term expires.
- Any vacancy that occurs will be filled using the same procedures as new-member recruitment.
- Replacement members complete the term of the person they replaced and may serve up to two additional terms.

Supervision and Removal

- Council members are expected to perform their duties as outlined in this manual.
- The Chair is responsible for communicating with Council members who do not fulfill their responsibilities and bringing the matter before the Council if necessary.
- Council members who are unable to perform their duties may be removed from the Council by a majority vote of the Council.

Expenses and Reimbursement

- Council members are not entitled to receive any salary or compensation for activities related to the Council.
- Currently, there are no travel requirements for Council members. Travel must be pre-approved by the Director.

IV. Council Ethical Guidelines

The Council conducts its business in a manner consistent with the AEE Code of Conduct:

Conflict of Interest

Definition: to derive personal or professional benefit from decisions made in your Certification capacity.

AEE staff and volunteers associated with the Certification Program, including Council members, act as agents of AEE with an interest in enriching lives through experiential education. The Certification program has a further interest in advancing the professional practices of members offering adventure therapy/outdoor behavioral healthcare through helping them meet Certification standards. AEE's shared interest is to help members meet certification criteria; any deviation from this interest should be disclosed and discussed with the Director for guidance. The foundational ethics in such work are both fairness and transparency. As such, situations in which a conflict of interest may occur (or potentially undermine fairness and transparency) must be reported to the Director.

In cases where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, Council members will recuse themselves from related Certification processes and deliberations. The Council will determine if there is a conflict of interest in consultation with the Director. The Director will remove any Council members who compromise the integrity of the Certification Program.

In order to avoid situations that could be perceived as a conflict of interest, Council members will:

- Disclose to AEE any current or prior relationships with a member seeking initial or continuing Certification.
- Avoid developing any type of relationship with members engaged in the Certification process that could impair professional judgment or negatively affect the Certification Program,
- decline to serve as a reviewer, with direction from the Council, for applicants with whom they have a relationship that would bias their judgment or offer personal gain.

Confidentiality

Any information provided by the member for the purpose of Certification will be considered confidential and will only be used by the Certification Council and AEE staff in the Certification process. Any documents provided for the purpose of Certification

must be safeguarded and maintained in confidence. The deliberations, status, and results of Certification are reported only to the applicant, the AEE Certification Program Staff, and the Certification Council.

A full summary of AEE Ethical Guidelines can be found on the '*Ethical Guidelines for Certified Clinical Adventure Therapist*' document.

V. Role of the Council Reviewer

The role of the Council Reviewer is to provide oversight of the Certification process for individuals seeking initial or continuing Certification.

Summary of Responsibilities

- Assist individuals with matters pertaining to the Certification application and renewal process.
- Review and follow up on the candidate's application until it is complete.
- Complete Candidate Assessment form for submission to the Council.
- Represent candidates to the Council with respect to matters relating to initial and continuing Certification.

Certification Council Reviewer Procedures

Initial Certification

Upon application from an Individual, the Director will designate a reviewer for the candidate. The following steps describe the process:

1. The Adventure Therapy Certification process begins with a candidate's submission of the [CCAT](#) application to the Director, who will track the candidate's progress through the certification process. The Director contacts the candidate within seven days of receiving it to inform them that their application is being reviewed.
2. The Director assigns the application to a member of the Council who will review the candidate's application and contact the candidate within seven days of receiving it. The Council member is then responsible for letting the candidate know through email whether required items are missing or that the application is complete and will be reviewed at the next Council meeting. A reviewer may contact and update the candidate by phone, but must send a follow-up email and copy the Director to document the conversation.
3. The Council member completes the CCAT Candidate Assessment Form when the application is complete and sends it to the Director at least two business days before the next Council meeting.

4. Council will meet monthly to review Candidate Assessment Forms (if there are applications to be reviewed). The Council will review and vote on each candidate regarding whether certification will be awarded, tabled because additional information about the candidate is requested by the Council before a decision can be reached, or denied. The Director does not have a vote but may express an opinion. Council decisions are made by a simple majority of those attending a meeting. For a vote to take place, two-thirds of the Council must be present.
5. The Director will notify candidates of the status of their application within seven days of the Council meeting.

The Director will:

- a) Send official notification to the candidate about the candidate's awarded certification; or
- b) Send official notification to the candidate about the candidate's deferral, denial, or certification, with clarifying information about the decision; or
- c) Update the candidate about the status of the application if the application is deferred because more information about the candidate is requested by the Council.

If a candidate is not awarded Adventure Therapy Certification, the candidate has the option to reapply after six months in order to correct and/or address deficiencies in the application. If the candidate disagrees with the Council's decision, they can initiate the appeals process (Please see the Appeal section in the AEE Certification Credentialing Manual.)

Recertification

To remain in good standing, a Certified Clinical Adventure Therapist must renew the certification every two years. Following initial certification, the candidate's ongoing certification is renewed upon payment of recertification fees and completion of 18 hours of adventure therapy-specific continuing education every 36 months.

VI. Council Meeting Protocols

Rules of Order for Certification Council Meetings

Discussion of issues and formal motions allows the Council to cast informed votes. The purposes of discussion are the airing of supporting and opposing views and the provision of additional, relevant information in consideration of any motion. Ideally, discussion allows us to better understand each other's views and helps the Council move toward agreement on the issues at hand.

The Chair's responsibility is to move the discussion forward, balancing informality with efficiency, keeping the discussion on topic, and allowing all those who wish to speak to do so.

Taking Formal Action

During the discussion of a motion, any voting Council members can offer an amendment to the motion. Proposed amendments are handled in one of the following ways:

A quorum of two-thirds of current members must be present for a vote to take place.

Votes will usually be conducted by a show of hands. Any vote may be conducted by secret ballot at the discretion of the Council or the Chair.

Voting Council members may vote on any motion in one of three ways:

For the motion,

Against the motion, or

Abstain.

A simple majority of voting members present carries a motion.

Abstentions do not count in determining the vote total. This will make an abstention neutral in the vote count.

The members who moved and seconded the original motion may accept the amendment, in which case, discussion proceeds on the amended motion.

The members who moved and seconded the original motion may reject the amendment, in which case, discussion of the amendment ensues.

At the conclusion of the discussion on the amendment, a vote is taken on the amendment. If the amendment passes, discussion returns to the original motion in its amended form. If the amendment is rejected, discussion returns to the original motion without amendment.

Voting

A quorum of two-thirds of current members must be present for a vote to take place.

Conflicts of interest are discussed (actual, potential, or perceived), and the Council will determine and document who should recuse themselves.

1. Votes will usually be conducted by a show of hands. Any vote may be conducted by secret ballot at the discretion of the Council or the Chair.
2. Voting Council members may vote on any motion in one of three ways:
 - For the motion,
 - Against the motion, or
 - Abstain. A simple majority of voting members present carries a motion. Abstentions do not count in determining the vote total but will be documented in the minutes. This will make an abstention neutral in the vote count.
5. Discussion on a topic may be ended in any of the following ways:
 - A calling of the question by a voting member whose turn it is to speak. At that time, the Council votes either to continue discussion or to end discussion and move to a vote. Members must vote either Yes or No when the question is called.
 - A request by the Chair for a vote to end the discussion. At that time, the Council votes either to continue discussion or to end discussion and move to a vote.
 - Withdrawal of a motion by those who moved and seconded the motion.
 - Tabling of the motion by the Chair.
6. Any motion on the floor must be resolved in one of the following ways
 - Adopted.
 - Rejected.

- Withdrawn by the members who moved and seconded the motion.
- Referred by the Council or by the Chair back to the small group for revision.
- Tabled by the Council or by the Chair for later consideration or vote.

Meeting Protocol

The meeting will follow a written agenda created by the Chair and Director and provided to Council members.

1. Call to Order

2. **Approval of Agenda:** At this point in the agenda, council members may add or delete items from the agenda and may change the order of presentation. Unless there is an objection, the Agenda is approved.

3. **Consent Agenda:** The consent agenda will include routine items that need approval, including minutes from prior meetings and other documents, such as non-controversial applications. Members may request corrections to minutes or the removal of an item to be placed into the regular agenda. If there are no changes requested, the Consent Agenda is accepted. Note: any items added to the consent agenda are to be added and documents uploaded at least 72 hours before the council meeting.

4. **Director's Report:** program status report and other relevant information.

5. Certification Discussion and Vote:

Before the meeting:

- Council members read the CCAT Candidate Assessment Form and any other relevant documents associated with the candidate's application.

During the meeting:

- Reviewer overview: Reviewer gives a succinct overview of their report, highlighting which certification criteria they think are still not met. Then the floor will be opened for any additional discussion on any part of the Reviewer Report.
- Question and Discussion Period: The Chair seeks clarifying questions from the Council on the reviewer's report. The reviewer responds to and answers questions that are raised. The chair gathers all of the specific concerns from the Council. The chair facilitates discussion on specific concerns raised by the Council (in clear order).
- Tabling/Deferring discussions: Issues that do not directly affect the individual's Certification vote will be tabled by the Chair for future discussion.

6. **Motion to Vote:**

- The reviewer proposes a motion. Options: Certification, defer Certification, or deny Certification
- Council has an opportunity to amend the motion - new motion adopted or rejected.
- The council votes on the motion. Options: For, against, abstain, or recuse. (See conflict of interest section above)
- Council minutes will record the vote as:
 - Approved without abstentions
 - Approved with abstentions and list those who abstained

7. **Electronic Voting**

- The Chair may advance a straightforward motion to an electronic vote.
- The Director must approve the topic of an electronic vote.
- Electronic votes will be conducted in the same way as in-person votes:
 - A quorum of 2/3rds of current members must vote to recognize a result
 - Council members may vote “for” the motion, “against” the motion, or “abstain”
 - 60% of voting members carry a motion
- A motion voted electronically can only be “adopted” or “rejected.”
- An electronic vote will remain open for a maximum of 7 days. The Director and Chair are responsible for tallying the votes and informing the Council of the outcome.
- The Council must review any electronic motions adopted or rejected at the start of the next Council meeting.

8. **Old Business:** Motions tabled at previous meetings were reopened for discussion and vote.

9. **New Business:** A motion must be made and seconded by voting members of the Council for items to be discussed.

10. **Recertification**

- *Before the meeting:*
 - Council members will read the recertification material that has been posted to the meeting file and prepare any questions they might have.
- *During the meeting:*
 - The reviewer gives a succinct overview of their review, highlighting any missing information or questions on recertification applications that have not been placed on the consent agenda. They can then make a motion on how to proceed with this recertification application.

11. **Committee Reports:** Informational report from Committee Chair or designated person. Motions may be submitted by the Council for consideration.

12. **Other Business:** Topics for general discussion may be considered here without a necessary motion. A Council member may introduce a motion at any point during the discussion. The discussion will be limited to the motion and any amendments offered.

13. **Adjournment**

Electronic Voting

- The Chair may advance a straightforward motion to an electronic vote.
- The Director must approve the topic of an electronic vote.
- Electronic votes will be conducted in the same way as in-person votes:
 - A quorum of 2/3rds of current members must vote to recognize a result
 - Council members may vote “for” the motion, “against” the motion, or “abstain”
 - 60% of voting members carry a motion
- A motion voted electronically can only be “adopted” or “rejected.”
- An electronic vote will remain open for a maximum of 7 days. The Director and Chair are responsible for tallying the votes and informing the Council of the outcome.
- The Council must review any electronic motions adopted or rejected at the start of the next Council meeting.

VII. AEE Volunteer Handbook

[Link to AEE Volunteer Handbook](#)

VIII. Appendix

Documents referenced within the Certification Council Handbook are available in AEE's Google Drive: Certification Council Handbook Appendices(hyperlinked)

Ethical Guidelines for Certified Clinical Adventure Therapists

CCAT Candidate Assessment Form with Reviewer Checklist

CCAT Recertification Assessment Form