Administrative Changes to AFI 41-104, *Professional Board and National Certification Examinations*

OPR: AF/SG1


This instruction implements AFPD 41-1, *Health Care Programs and Resources*, and provides requirements and procedures for applying to take professional board or national certification examinations. See Attachment 1 for a glossary of references, abbreviations, and acronyms. This AFI may be supplemented at any level, but all supplements must be routed to the OPR for coordination prior to certification and approval. The authorities to waive wing/unit level requirements in this publication are identified with a Tier (“T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3”) number following the compliance statement. See AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the Publication OPR for non-tiered compliance items. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located in the Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS). This instruction applies to all Air Force military (Active Duty Air Force, Air Force Reserve serving on extended active duty, Air National Guard, and Aeromedical Evacuation Squadrons) attached to or assigned to a unit with a medical or aeromedical evacuation mission.
SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This is the second publication of AFI 41-104. It includes updated guidance for reimbursement for professional board and certification examinations as well as maintenance of certification requirements.

1. Overview. This AFI describes the approval process and options for taking professional, board or national certification examinations in the Medical Service. It also describes the criteria for reimbursement of fees and expenses, and identifies documentation requirements.

2. Roles and Responsibilities.

2.1. The Assistant Surgeon General, Medical Force Development (AF/SG1) shall establish guidance and procedures which outlines approved Corps-specific board certification entities and/or examinations.

2.2. Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) and Medical Unit Commanders including ANG Medical Unit Commanders shall:

2.2.1. Confirm a healthcare professional’s examination eligibility (ANG and AFRC full-time providers only) and completion of all prerequisite requirements before approval of reimbursement of examination fees and placement on temporary duty (TDY) status to take examinations offered by any organization identified by the annual update of Certifying Agencies posted by SG1 on the KX (https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx). (T-3)

2.2.2. Approve local MTF funding/reimbursement for examination fees and funded TDY for initial examinations (if not previously GME funded). (T-3)

2.2.3. MTF and medical unit commanders may approve funding/reimbursement for subsequent recertification examinations and maintenance of certification (MOC) activities required for performance of duty contingent upon the availability of funds. As board certification is a quality indicator of excellence within a healthcare organization, commanders are highly encouraged to approve such funding/reimbursement requests if fiscally possible.

2.2.3.1. Subsequent recertifications (examinations and MOC activities) should be considered for funding/re-imbursement if such MOC activities and examinations have been completed when the active duty service member has at least 2 years of active duty remaining.

2.2.4. If an examination is not passed upon first attempt, subsequent attempts by the same or different certifying board for the same certification within the same certification cycle will not be reimbursed by the AF.

2.3. The healthcare professional seeking funding or reimbursement for certification examination shall:

2.3.1. Follow instructions for either officers (paragraph 3) or enlisted (paragraph 4) as outlined below.
2.3.2. Provide proof of completion of recertification examination or MOC requirements to the MTF and medical unit commander as required for approval of local reimbursement.

3. Professional Board Examinations, Certification, Re-Certification and Maintenance of Certification for Officers

3.1. Application for a Professional Board Examination or Certification.

3.1.1. Officers eligible for a professional board or certification examination will engage directly with the examining agency to confirm eligibility. (T-3)

3.1.2. If the exam is available locally (precluding the need for TDY), then it must be taken locally.

3.2. Officers must have a minimum of 2 years of active duty remaining after completing the examination or MOC activities to qualify for reimbursement, unless Air Force, DoD or state directives, or the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) require certification or certification is a requirement of employment or position (e.g. GME Program Director/faculty). (T-3)

3.3. Examination Request Approval

3.3.1. An officer will submit to his/her commander a letter (with supporting correspondence or documentation), in advance of the examination, requesting funding for examination fees and, as needed, to be placed on TDY status to take the examination. (T-3)

3.3.2. The commander must give a written reply, which will authorize reimbursement for the examination and TDY status to take the examination. (T-3)

3.4. For officers serving at HQ USAF, MAJCOM, FOA, or a subcommand, the appropriate surgeon may approve the request.

3.5. The Air Force will reimburse once for costs associated with an initial national certification examination required for performance of duty. As board certification is a quality indicator of excellence within a healthcare organization, commanders are highly encouraged to approve such funding/reimbursement requests if fiscally possible.

3.5.1. MTF and medical unit commanders may approve funding/reimbursement for subsequent recertification examinations once per certification/currency cycle.

3.5.2. The Air Force will not reimburse for costs associated with initial national certification examination if said examination is required for commissioning into their Corps.

4. National Certifications and Examinations for Enlisted Personnel

4.1. Application for a National Certification

4.1.1. Enlisted personnel must contact the examining agency to determine eligibility for certification in their field, and to request testing as close as possible to the member’s duty location. (T-3)
4.1.1.1. If a graduate from an accredited course, follow existing course guidelines to enroll in the examining agency’s database.

4.1.1.2. In most instances, the Education and Training Officer or Unit Training Manager (UTM) is the point of contact to assist with contacting certification agencies and to request these examinations at the duty location.

4.1.1.3. If the exam is available locally, then it must be taken locally.

4.2. Enlisted members must have a minimum of 2 years of active duty remaining after completing the examination to qualify for reimbursement, unless Air Force, DoD or State directives require certification. (T-3)

4.3. Examination Request Approval

4.3.1. Once the examining agency confirms eligibility, the member will submit a written request to his/her commander requesting permission to take the examination given by any organization listed in the annual update of Certification Agencies posted by SG1on the KX (https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx). (T-3)

4.3.2. The commander must give a written reply, which will authorize reimbursement for the initial examination and authorize TDY status to take the examination. (T-3)

4.4. For members serving at HQ USAF, MAJCOM, FOA, or a subcommand, the appropriate surgeon may approve the request.

4.5. The Air Force will reimburse once for costs associated with initial national certification examination required for performance of duty. (T-3)

4.5.1. MTF and medical unit commanders may approve funding/reimbursement for subsequent recertification examinations if required to perform his/her duty once per certification/currency cycle.

4.5.2. For AFSC 4H0X1, Cardiopulmonary Laboratory, Certification in Respiratory Care is mandatory.

5. Special Situations

5.1. Failed Board Examinations. If the member successfully passes the second attempt, reimbursement for travel and examination fees is NOT authorized, if the member received reimbursement for the first failed attempt. If the member was in TDY status to take the first attempt examination, then the second attempt examination will be permitted as PTDY only, unless available in the local area.

5.2. Recertification and Maintenance of Certification (MOC). Many specialties require periodic recertification examinations with annual MOC educational curricula to be completed as part of the recertification process during the interval between examinations.

5.2.1. A member may be reimbursed for the recertification examination and/or MOC requirement fees upon providing proof of completion of either requirement. If a separate examination fee is required, the local MTF may reimburse members once per currency period.
5.2.2. For specialties which require completion of MOC curricula during the interval between examinations, members may apply for local funding to cover the cost of the MOC requirements. Should a prepayment option be offered by the certifying board (e.g., paying up front for 10 years of MOC at a discounted rate), members may only be reimbursed annually for the cost of the MOC for a single year, with cumulative reimbursement for prepaid MOC not to exceed that which was originally prepaid by the member. This reimbursement requires that the member has 2 years of active duty remaining at the time he/she has completed the MOC activity.

5.3. ARC members qualify for reimbursement of recertification if they are not serving a training obligation, have completed their initial ADSC, are currently serving on an extended active duty (EAD) tour, and will have at least 2 years active duty service remaining after they complete the professional board examination.

5.4. Long Course Programs. Travel costs and expenses related to certification, recertification, or national licensing agencies not listed in the annual update of Certification Agencies, but required as part of a Medical Service officer’s long course program (Education and Training Course Announcements (ETCA) https://etca.randolph.af.mil/) may be reimbursable provided that AFI 44-119, Medical Quality Operations, does not specifically prohibit them.

5.5. Multiple Board Certifications. MTF and medical unit commanders may reimburse for more than one certification examination and/or MOC, and are responsible for ensuring the certifications are not redundant and apply to performance of duties in the officer’s AFSC.

5.6. Travel Restrictions. When TDY funds are authorized, members will abide by the Joint Federal Travel Regulation.

5.7. Consecutive professional meetings. Members must obtain prior approval to attend professional meetings while on TDY for board or certification examinations or to handle delays en route.

5.8. Membership Fees. Annual or recurring membership fees are the responsibility of individual Medical Service members.

5.9. Required dental assistants. Certain dental board examinations require the candidate to furnish a patient and a dental assistant. Officers may receive local funding for these personnel, if it is available.

5.10. Members Serving OCONUS. Members serving Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) may receive funded TDY for Parts I and/or II of professional specialty board or certification examinations, if local examination is not available.

5.10.1. Before a commander approves a return to CONUS for the examination, he/she must consider the feasibility of the member taking the examination in an overseas area closer than CONUS or of requesting that the senior Air Force functional leader in the geographical area coordinate with the responsible agency to administer the examination in the overseas area. (T-3)

5.10.2. OCONUS members must have at least 6 months left to serve in the OCONUS assignment. The OCONUS MAJCOM has the authority to waive this requirement to
meet testing schedules for consecutive overseas tours, or to address concerns on a case by case basis.

5.11. Certifications not listed in the annual update of Certifying Agencies ([https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx](https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx)). MTF and medical unit commanders may approve other certification/recertification requests not specifically covered in this instruction to meet AF, AFSC and/or MTF/medical unit mission requirements pending coordination with the SG Consultant. Questions regarding funding parameters or policy on use of MTF or medical unit DHP funds will be addressed to AF/SGY.

6. Post-Examination Responsibilities

6.1. Reimbursement

6.1.1. For reimbursement of certification/recertification examination or MOC fees, the member will file a Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business. Member must attach relevant receipts with a copy of the commander’s approval for reimbursement letter, and proof of completion of the recertification examination or MOC activity. The voucher must be routed through the MTF Resource Management Office (they will add the proper fund cite) or Resource Advisor (for non-MTF organizations), and submitted to the base Finance Office for payment. In order to properly record costs in the accounting system, individuals that traveled TDY will separate their examination/certification fees from their travel costs. Individuals will consult their Resource Management Offices for guidance on how to allocate the separate costs within the Defense Travel System (DTS). If costs cannot be allocated in DTS, then individuals will omit the examination/certification fees from the travel voucher (DD Form 1351-2, Travel Voucher or Sub voucher); and claim those costs on the Standard Form 1164. (T-3)

6.2. Personnel Records Updates

6.2.1. Officers. The officer will notify his/her commander and commander’s support staff (CSS) of the completion of a specialty certification examination. The member will provide a copy of the specialty certification notification letter or certificate to the unit CSS. The CSS will complete an AF Form 2096, Classification/On-The-Job Training Action, requesting the award of the "M" prefix for the AFSC directly related to the field in which the officer obtained certification, as identified in Air Force Officer Classification Directory (AFOCD). The completed AF Form 2096 is forwarded to the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) for final approval, awarding of the "M" prefix, and input into the Personnel Data System. (T-3)

6.2.1.1. The approved professional certifications for which officers may receive award of the "M" prefix are listed in the annual update of Certification Agencies posted by SG1 on the KX ([https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx](https://kx2.afms.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalCorps/Pages/AFI-41-104-List-of-Certifying-Agencies.aspx)).

6.2.1.2. Individuals with certifications earned and approved under previous policies can maintain the “M” prefix for the entire certification period, but must maintain active certification in order to retain the “M” prefix.
6.2.1.3. The BSC also awards the "M" prefix for state licensure in professional engineering, audiology, and speech pathology.

6.2.2. Enlisted Personnel. Enlisted personnel must provide a copy of the certification documentation from the professional organization to the unit Education and Training Office, UTM, and/or Supervisor to update training or personnel records as appropriate. (T-3)

6.2.3. Privileged Providers. Privileged providers will provide a copy of all professional certifications achieved to the unit Credentials Monitor for verification and inclusion with the provider’s credentialing documents. (T-3)

6.3. Medical, Dental, Nurse and Biomedical Science Corps Officers Board Certification Pay

6.3.1. Certain AFSCs designated in AFI 41-109, Special Pay for Health Professionals, qualify for board certification pay. For BSC, DC, MC and NC officers to receive board certification pay, the officer must send a copy of board certification to HQ AFPC/DPANF1 via fax (DSN 665-1277/COMM 210-565-1277), email (afpc.dpangf1@us.af.mil), or US Mail to HQ AFPC/DPANF1, 550 C Street W, Suite 25, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4727. The request must include officer’s name, rank, duty location and SSN. HQ AFPC/DPANF1 will start board certification payment and forward certification documentation to be included in the officer’s promotion folder and ARMS.

6.3.1.1. All boards for pay purposes must be on the approved list as authorized by OSD (HQ).

6.3.1.2. For any specialty under the Consolidation of Pays authority (37 U.S.C. §335), a contract must also be submitted requiring at least one year retainability with the aforementioned documentation.

THOMAS W. TRAVIS, Lt Gen, USAF, MC, CFS
Surgeon General
Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References
AFPD 41-1, Health Care Programs and Resources, 15 Apr 1994
AFI 41-109, Special Pay for Health Professionals, 27 May 1994
AFI 44-119, Medical Quality Operations, 16 Aug 2011
AFMAN 33-363, Management of Records, 1 Mar 2008
Air Force Officer Classification Directory (AFOCD), 30 Apr 2011
Education and Training Course Announcements (ETCA) https://etca.randolph.af.mil/

Adopted Forms
AF Form 2096, Classification/On-The-Job Training Action
Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business
DD Form 1351-2, Travel Voucher or Sub voucher
AF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication

Abbreviations and Acronyms
AFB—Air Force Base
AFCAT—Air Force Catalog
AFI—Air Force Instruction
AFSC—Air Force Specialty Code
ARC—Air Reserve Components
BSC—Biomedical Sciences Corps
CONUS—Continental United States
CRS—Conditional Reserve Status
CSS—Command Support Staff
DC—Dental Corps
DoD—Department of Defense
EAD—Extended Active Duty
HQ AFPC—Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center
HQ USAF—Headquarters US Air Force
MAJCOM—Major Command
MC—Medical Corps
MOC—Maintenance of Certification
MPF—Military Personnel Flight
MTF—Medical Treatment Facility
NC—Nurse Corps
OCONUS—Outside the Continental United States
PTDY—Permissive Temporary Duty
TDY—Temporary Duty
UTM—Unit Training Manager