

The recognition of a certification by the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) provides users of the certification with the confidence that the process by which the certification was developed is of the highest quality.

Below are the criteria against which submissions for NSSB Certification Recognition will be evaluated and the rationale for the criteria. Specific documentation requirements and format, can be found in the NSSB Certification Recognition Application Form.

Assessments are consistent with federal civil rights laws with respect to race, color, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, disability and national origin.

Requiring that the assessments adhere to federal civil rights laws, the NSSB can be confident that the certification under consideration does not discriminate against protected classes of individuals.

This step also helps to increase opportunity, access and participation of under-represented groups in the workforce.

Assessments are developed consistent with relevant professional and technical standards and government guidelines to ensure reliability, fairness and validity.

In any certification, it is important that the underlying knowledge and skills were determined in a technically appropriate manner.

In addition to evaluating whether research outcomes are reliable and valid, demographics of the individuals participating in the development of the assessments will be compared to the overall demographics of the industry.

Assessments are maximally accessible to individuals.

One of the key goals of developing a skill standards system is to open up career opportunities for all Americans. All individuals, including those with disabilities, should have an opportunity to receive a certification. Not only will this help expand the pool of qualified workers, it will meet the legislative requirements of both the National Skill Standards Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Documentation will be examined to ensure that all individuals, including minorities, women and individuals with disabilities, have the opportunity to participate in the certification process.

Administration of assessments delivered consistently.

Administration of assessments may have a great impact on the outcome of the certification process. Therefore, there should be guidelines by which all assessments are delivered. By ensuring consistency, the NSSB can be reasonably assured that candidates for certification understand the directions and have not received different instructions or explanations of the process that may hinder their ability to perform successfully.

While different assessment methods can be used (i.e., Braille or multiple languages), materials will be examined to ensure consistency in instruction and test administration.

Assessments are based upon clearly articulated skill standards.

By spelling out the knowledge, skills and performance needed for success in today's job market, skill standards will make information that is vital to career success more accessible to larger numbers of individuals. In addition, with standards-based assessments, subjective measures can be replaced with more objective measurements based on skill standards, which will help eliminate bias in important employment decisions.

Materials will be reviewed to determine whether the underlying skills and knowledge were developed in a reliable and valid manner. The qualifications and demographics of individuals participating in the development of the skill standards will be compared with those in the industry.

Confidentiality of the assessment-related documentation is maintained.

Strong mechanisms to protect the confidentiality of the assessments are critical to the integrity of the assessment process. Assessment-related documents include, but are not limited to, written examinations, applications, candidate feedback documentation and assessment scores.

Documentation will be reviewed to determine if – to the extent possible – policies have been implemented to mitigate the opportunity of a breach of confidentiality. This includes information on the number and type of personnel with access to confidential information and how data is stored.

Certifications are accepted by the industry or profession that the content represents.

It is imperative that the content of the standards accurately reflects workplace requirements. Individuals and employers can thereby be assured that certifications actually document the skills and knowledge that are necessary to succeed in the workplace.

Other evidence showing industry acceptance may include such items as: the number of individuals certified, number of employers requiring the certification as a condition of employment, or amount of in-kind contributions from the industry in the development of the certifications.

NSSB Certification Recognition Criteria

Certification procedures include a mechanism to provide feedback to candidates on their performance, including whether the candidate passed or failed certification.

The assessments that certification candidates take measure their mastery of the knowledge and skills necessary for the workplace.

Therefore, it is important that candidates receive timely feedback on their performance in order to seek out additional training or provide employers with the documentation of their mastery.

Certification includes a formal process for individuals to appeal the outcome.

Because employers may use the certification as one tool in making hiring or promotion decisions, it is important that all efforts are made to ensure fairness of the process. If a candidate for certification has evidence that safeguards were not successfully enforced, he or she should have a mechanism to objectively contest the outcome of a certification.

Attention will be placed not only on the actual appeals process, but also on whether the process is explained consistently to individuals in an understandable manner.

Certifications include a mechanism to ensure the continued relevancy to the industry.

To be meaningful, certifications and their underlying knowledge and skills must respond to the changing needs of the industry. This fluidity enables individuals to remain current in their field and promote career and educational progression.

Materials will be examined to determine the process for re-certification of individuals, the schedule for updating the content of certifications, and the scope of other improvement activities.

Certification illustrates alignment with NSSB standards or NSSB framework.

The NSSB has developed a flexible framework for a nationwide, voluntary skill standards system. Alignment of certification efforts with this framework will ensure coordination of the efforts of all stakeholders involved with workforce development activities.

Alignment also will help users of the system including policymakers, workers, educators, and employers to identify the most appropriate use of the certifications in their situation.

NSSB Certification Recognition: Promoting Quality in the Certification Marketplace!