

NFPA 1000
Standard for
Fire Service
Professional Qualifications
Accreditation and
Certification Systems

1994 Edition



National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, PO Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101
An International Codes and Standards Organization

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NFPA 1000
Standard for
Fire Service Professional Qualifications
Accreditation and Certification Systems
1994 Edition

This edition of NFPA 1000, *Standard for Fire Service Professional Qualifications Accreditation and Certification Systems*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Accreditation and Certification to Fire Service Professional Qualifications, released by the Technical Correlating Committee on Professional Qualifications, and acted on by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc., at its Annual Meeting held May 16–18, 1994, in San Francisco, CA. It was issued by the Standards Council on July 14, 1994, with an effective date of August 5, 1994.

The 1994 edition of this document has been approved by the American National Standards Institute.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1000

In 1990 the Professional Qualifications Correlating Committee recommended that the Association establish a project related to fire service certification and accreditation programs. The project was approved at the July 1990 meeting of the NFPA Standards Council. As a result of this action, a technical committee was named to develop procedures for the accreditation of agencies involved in certification, based on the NFPA Professional Qualifications Standards, and procedures for the certification of individuals to those standards.

The Technical Committee on Accreditation and Certification to Fire Service Professional Qualifications met for the first time in October 1991 and regularly during 1992 and 1993 to develop this document. The committee reviewed materials related to accreditation and certification programs of non-fire service organizations and, where possible, used nationally accepted requirements from these programs as the basis for this document. The committee's objective was to develop requirements that could be used to evaluate accreditation and certification systems that use NFPA Professional Qualifications Standards.

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Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for the management of the NFPA Professional Qualifications Project and documents related to Professional Qualifications for fire service, public safety, and related personnel.

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This list represents the membership at the time the Committee was balloted on the text of this edition. Since that time, changes in membership may have occurred. A key to classifications is found at the back of this document.

NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for developing documents on procedures for fire service personnel certification to NFPA National Professional Fire Service Qualifications Standards and procedures for accrediting national, state, and local jurisdictions as certifying agencies for NFPA National Fire Service Qualifications Standards.

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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on the paragraph can be found in Appendix A.

Information on referenced publications can be found in Chapter 3 and Appendix C.

Chapter 1 Administration

1-1 Scope. This standard establishes the minimum criteria for accrediting bodies and the minimum criteria for the assessment and validation of the process used to certify fire and related emergency response personnel to professional qualifications standards.

1-2 Purpose.

1-2.1 The purpose of this standard is to establish criteria/requirements applicable to organizations providing accreditation to and for those entities certifying fire and related emergency response personnel as having met or complied with a recognized national standard.

1-2.2 It is not the intent of this standard to conflict with the statutory requirements of any jurisdiction.

1-3 General.

1-3.1* Organizations that accredit certifying entities or that certify individuals to fire service professional qualifications standards shall meet the requirements of this standard.

1-3.2 Accrediting bodies shall meet the requirements of Chapter 3.

1-3.3 Certifying entities shall meet the requirements of Chapter 4.

1-3.4 Accreditation of a certifying entity shall be, at a minimum, based on the process described in Section 3-2 and Chapter 4.

Chapter 2 Definitions

Accredit. To give official authorization to or approve a process or procedure, to recognize as conforming to a standard, and to recognize an entity (e.g., an educational institution) as maintaining standards that qualify its graduates for admission to higher or more specialized institutions or for professional practice.

Accrediting Body. A voluntary, nongovernmental association that administers accrediting procedures for entities that certify individuals to fire service professional qualifications standards.

Approved. Acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

NOTE: The National Fire Protection Association does not approve, inspect, or certify any installations, procedures, equipment, or materials; nor does it approve or evaluate testing laboratories. In determining the acceptability of installations, procedures, equipment, or materials, the authority having jurisdiction may base acceptance on compliance with NFPA or other appropriate standards. In the absence of such standards, said authority may require evidence of proper installation, procedure, or use. The authority having jurisdiction may also refer to the listings or labeling practices of an organization concerned with product evaluations that is in a position to determine compliance with appropriate standards for the current production of listed items.

Authority Having Jurisdiction. The organization, office, or individual responsible for approving equipment, an installation, or a procedure.

NOTE: The phrase "authority having jurisdiction" is used in NFPA documents in a broad manner, since jurisdictions and approval agencies vary, as do their responsibilities. Where public safety is primary, the authority having jurisdiction may be a federal, state, local, or other regional department or individual such as a fire chief; fire marshal; chief of a fire prevention bureau, labor department, or health department; building official; electrical inspector; or other having statutory authority. For insurance purposes, an insurance inspection department, rating bureau, or other insurance company representative may be the authority having jurisdiction. In many circumstances, the property owner or his or her designated agent assumes the role of the authority having jurisdiction; at government installations, the commanding officer or departmental official may be the authority having jurisdiction.

Certification. Attests authoritatively; specifically, the issuance of a document that states that one has demonstrated the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a field.

Certifying Entity. An organization that is accredited to issue certificates to individuals.

Job Performance Requirement. A statement that describes a specific job task, lists the items necessary to complete the task, and defines measurable or observable outcomes and evaluation areas for the specific task.

Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Should. Indicates a recommendation or that which is advised but not required.

Chapter 3 Accrediting Body Requirements**3-1 General.**

3-1.1* The accrediting body shall be independent of direct governmental control and shall have sole responsibility for the final decision on the accreditation of a certifying entity.

3-1.2* The accrediting body shall not be the certifying entity and shall document policies and procedures to implement this requirement.

3-1.3* The accrediting body shall not be a standards-making body for the standard(s) for which accreditation for certification is being offered.

3-1.4 The accrediting body shall conduct accreditation on a multi-state/provincial, national, or international basis.

3-1.5* The accrediting body shall evaluate for accreditation the certification programs for fire and related emergency response personnel as requested by the certifying entity and as defined by NFPA professional qualifications standards, other NFPA standards related to the competence of emergency responders, or equivalent standards used by the certifying entity.

3-1.6* The accrediting body shall evaluate for accreditation entities that are empowered to operate and that confer certification to fire and related emergency response personnel.

3-1.7* The accrediting body shall develop and maintain public documents that describe the accreditation process, including, at a minimum, the scope, evaluative criteria, and procedures.

3-1.8* The accrediting body shall have impartial, public representation in its evaluation, policy, and decision-making processes.

3-1.9 The accrediting body shall have the resources necessary to implement and maintain the accrediting process as described in this standard.

3-2 Accreditation Process.

3-2.1 Mission. The evaluation of a certifying entity shall be based on its own stated mission. The mission shall be consistent with purposes accepted as appropriate to the fire service and to the recognized scope of the accrediting body.

3-2.2 Criteria. Accrediting bodies shall utilize evaluative criteria and processes that judge:

- (a) The appropriateness of the candidate program's mission, and
- (b) The adequacy of resources and organization to meet its mission, and
- (c) Outcomes that indicate that the mission shall be met, and
- (d) The reasonable assurance of the continued meeting of the program's mission.

3-2.3 Timing.

3-2.3.1 The accrediting body shall evaluate a program for candidacy only at the invitation of the party responsible for the candidate program.

3-2.3.2 The accrediting body shall have the right to initiate a review of the accreditation status of an accredited certifying entity at any time.

3-2.4* Term. Accreditation shall not be permanent. The accrediting body shall develop and maintain policies regarding the term for which accreditation is granted and the periodic reevaluation of programs that it accredits.

3-2.5 Appeals.

3-2.5.1 The accrediting body shall establish policies and procedures for appealing those decisions refusing or terminating accreditation (or candidacy) of a program.

3-2.5.2 The accrediting body shall maintain the accreditation (or candidacy) status of the program until completion of the appeal process.

3-2.6* Change in Scope. The accrediting body shall develop and maintain policies and procedures that address changes in the scope of certifying activities by an accredited certifying entity.

3-2.7 Initial Accreditation Process. The steps in the initial accreditation process shall consist, at a minimum, of:

- (a) A self-analysis of the candidate program, and
- (b) A written report of the results of the self-analysis, and
- (c) A review of the report by the accrediting body, and
- (d) A site visitation by the accrediting body to examine the applicant certification system in relation to the criteria for accreditation established by the accrediting body, and
- (e) A written preliminary report to the applicant by the accrediting body concerning the status of the application, and
- (f) An opportunity and a reasonable period for the applicant to comment on the preliminary report before final action is taken relative to the accreditation status, and
- (g) A final report and written decision regarding the application and accreditation status.

3-2.7.1 The accrediting body shall develop, maintain, and furnish to all applicants statements of the topics to be contained in the self-analysis required in 3-2.7(a).

3-2.7.2 The accrediting body shall develop, maintain, and furnish to all applicants statements of the procedures to be used in the site visitation required in 3-2.7(d).

3-2.7.3 The accrediting body shall develop and maintain policies for the selection, training, and evaluation of personnel who conduct the site visitation required in 3-2.7(d).

3-2.8 Withdrawal of Application. The accrediting body shall permit an applicant to withdraw an application for accreditation at any time before a final decision is made on that application.

Chapter 4 Certifying Entity Requirements

4-1 Administration of Programs.

4-1.1* Authority. The certifying entity that is a candidate for accreditation shall provide documentation of its authority to issue certificates.

4-1.2 Mission and Goals. The certifying entity shall document its mission and goals.

4-1.3 Levels. The certifying entity shall publish a listing of the certification levels that it has adopted, including career path and prerequisites, if any, for each level.

4-1.4 Job Performance Requirements.

4-1.4.1* The certifying entity shall utilize the job performance requirements found in the appropriate NFPA professional qualification standards, other NFPA standards related to the competence of emergency responders, or equivalent standards as adopted by the authority having jurisdiction.

4-1.4.2 The certifying entity shall provide to applicants, upon request, a listing of the job performance requirements to be used in the certification process and the prerequisites required before taking examinations at the various certification levels.

4-1.5* Funding. The certifying entity shall provide evidence of the financial capability to support its continuous operation. The certifying entity shall provide documentation to describe the source(s) of its funding. The certifying entity shall utilize the budgetary and auditing procedures established by the authority having jurisdiction.

4-1.6 Record Keeping/Documentation.

4-1.6.1 The certifying entity shall adopt policies and procedures specifying which information it will reserve or keep confidential and which information it will release or make available, consistent with applicable local, state/provincial, and federal requirements.

4-1.6.2* The certifying entity shall maintain a record-keeping system that ensures the retrievability and preservation of certification records.

4-1.7 Staffing.

4-1.7.1 The certifying entity shall have and maintain the personnel resources necessary to implement and sustain the certification system.

4-1.7.2 The certifying entity shall adopt and publish minimum criteria for the evaluators used in its programs. At a minimum, evaluators shall:

- (a) Have adequate knowledge of skills for subject matter, and
- (b) Have familiarity with the evaluation/examination and record-keeping processes.

4-1.7.3 The certifying entity shall develop and maintain a process for the periodic evaluation of evaluators to assess currency of skills and knowledge levels.

4-1.8 Facilities and Equipment.

4-1.8.1 The certifying entity shall provide adequate space for classroom and manipulative skills testing as required to serve its purposes.

4-1.8.2 The facilities and equipment provided shall ensure that the health and safety of the participants is safeguarded.

4-1.9 Delegation of Authority.

4-1.9.1* An accredited entity that elects to delegate some or all of its certifying authority to another entity shall establish written policies regarding such delegation.

4-1.9.2 The delegated certification authority shall be conducted under the same procedures, criteria, and standards as those used by the accredited entity. Such delegated authority shall not be transferable.

4-1.9.3 The accredited entity shall be responsible for compliance with the criteria of the accrediting body.

4-1.9.4* The accredited entity shall not delegate its certifying authority to another entity that has broader authority.

4-1.10* Conflicts of Interest. The certifying entity shall not be the national standards-making body for the standard(s) for which certification is being offered.

4-2 Policies and Procedures.

4-2.1* Statutory Compliance. The certifying entity shall provide evidence of compliance with applicable statutes and other state/provincial, federal, and local regulations operative in its jurisdiction.

4-2.2 Nondiscrimination. The certifying entity shall ensure that its services are available to all qualified individuals without regard to race, creed, sex, age, or ethnic origin.

4-2.3 Safety and Health.

4-2.3.1* The certifying entity shall ensure the safety and health of individuals participating in the evaluation process by complying with applicable NFPA standards or their equivalents, including NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*.

4-2.3.2* Personal protective clothing, apparatus, equipment, and facilities utilized in the evaluation of candidates shall meet the applicable NFPA standard(s) as required in Chapters 4, 5, and 7 of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, or equivalent standards adopted by the authority having jurisdiction.

4-2.4 Evaluation/Testing.

4-2.4.1* The certifying entity shall establish and maintain procedures for administering a standardized written and manipulative skills examination, where applicable, for each level of certification offered.

4-2.4.2 Examinations shall be administered or caused to be administered by the certifying entity for each level of certification offered.

4-2.4.3 Examinations shall be drawn from a test bank(s) and/or job performance skills maintained by the certifying entity.

4-2.4.4 The certifying entity shall establish an evaluation security system that will prevent compromising of the evaluation instrument(s) and the evaluation process.

4-2.4.5 The certifying entity shall ensure that questions and job skill tests used in certification examinations are reliable discriminators.

4-2.4.6 The certifying entity shall ensure that question item banks utilized in the certification process are of sufficient size to allow generation of multiple written examination forms.

4-2.4.7* The certifying entity shall ensure that cognitive and manipulative skills examinations are comprehensive with respect to the requirements of the professional qualification standard being tested.

4-2.4.8* Certifying entities shall ensure that evaluators of manipulative skills testing perform their evaluations in an objective manner.

4-2.5 Historical Recognition.

4-2.5.1 The certifying entity shall document the policy and procedures to be used toward historical recognition of prior training conducted within its jurisdiction.

4-2.5.2 Adoption of any standard or program shall not render invalid any individual's prior certification.

4-2.6* Reciprocity. The certifying entity shall develop a policy and procedures to be used to evaluate certification or training received in another jurisdiction.

4-2.7* Currency and Recertification. The certifying entity shall provide documentation describing a currency policy and a recertification policy.

4-2.8 Suspension, Revocation, and Denial. The certifying entity shall develop and maintain policies and procedures for the suspension, revocation, and denial of certification.

4-2.9* Appeals. The certifying entity shall document procedures to resolve disputes arising from the interpretation or application of any provision of the certification process.

Chapter 5 Referenced Publications

5-1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document. The edition indicated for each reference is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this document.

5-1.1 NFPA Publication. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 1992 edition.

Appendix A Explanatory Material

Appendix A is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only. This appendix contains explanatory material, numbered to correspond with the applicable text paragraphs.

A-1-3.1 Fire service organizations, as public agencies, are open to public scrutiny and are held accountable for their actions. There is value in being able to demonstrate that the personnel of these agencies are certified as meeting standards of competency by an entity that has itself been evaluated by an independent, thorough, objective, and public process and approved (accredited) as meeting the requirements of the process. Accreditation establishes accountability for performance by putting competency on the record so that it can be evaluated on the record.

A-3-1.1 The accrediting body should have the ability to operate independently of political or economic influences either within or outside the organization that sponsors the accrediting activity. The accrediting body should not be obligated to, nor should its decisions on particular schools or programs be reviewed by, any other body having political or economic goals that might conflict with the educational goals of accreditation.

A-3-1.2 It is the intent of the committee that accreditation, certification, and standards-making should be conducted objectively and independently. Care should be taken to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest. Accreditation, certification, and standards-making entities should establish policies and procedures to ensure that no individual, entity, or interest group exercises undue or inap-

propriate influence over the standards-making, accreditation, or certification system.

A-3-1.3 See A-3-1.2.

A-3-1.5 The NFPA's professional qualifications system is made up of nine standards (*see below*), which set the job performance requirements for a number of fire and related emergency service professions. The standards that comprise the system establish, in terms of job performance requirements, the minimum criteria necessary to perform the specific job function. The standards are not training outlines, they are the criteria for the evaluation of an individual's ability to perform critical job functions. In many cases this evaluation is conducted as part of a certification process.

NFPA 1000, *Standard on Fire Service Professional Qualifications Accreditation and Certification Systems*, 1994 edition.

NFPA 1001, *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1002, *Standard for Fire Department Vehicle Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1003, *Standard for Airport Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, 1994 edition.

NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1031, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1033, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1035, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educator*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1041, *Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

Other NFPA standards that a certifying entity may seek to certify include, but are not necessarily limited to:

NFPA 472, *Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 473, *Standard for Competencies for EMS Personnel Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 600, *Standard on Industrial Fire Brigades*, 1992 edition. (This standard might not be applicable, as it might not set criteria that can be used for certification.)

NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*, 1992 edition.

A-3-1.6 The accrediting body should provide evidence that its policies, evaluative criteria, procedures, and evaluative decisions are accepted by the appropriate communities of interest, such as the fire service, educators, educational institutions, other accrediting bodies, practitioners, employers, and public agencies.

A-3-1.7 Procedures should include applications, self-study, granting, withdrawing, revoking or suspending, appealing decisions, responding to public inquiries, and term of accreditation. The accrediting body should make public a current listing of the accreditation or candidacy of all institutions or programs with which it is affiliated.

A-3-1.8 Accrediting bodies should include public representation. This would include individuals who are not educators in, or members of, the profession for which students are being prepared, nor in any way directly related to the institutions or programs being evaluated. Accrediting bodies should include representation of the users of the accreditation system.

A-3-2.4 The term of accreditation should be no longer than five years. This is based on the revision cycle for NFPA standards and the time required for certifying entities to implement changes into their programs.

A-3-2.6 Such policy statements should address possible changes in the scope of a certifying entity's activities. The policy, at a minimum, should make provision for the certification entity to withdraw voluntarily from the accreditation program completely, or to withdraw voluntarily all or some of its programs from the accreditation system.

A-4-1.1 The documentation required by this section should be either:

(a) Legislative acts; resolutions; state/provincial and federal statutes; administrative codes from a state, provincial, territorial, or national government authorizing the entity to certify the professional competence of fire service personnel; or

(b) Significant evidence of support for its accreditation as a certifying entity from within its constituency.

The accrediting body should verify the certifying entity's empowerment, such as: the existence of laws that designate the organization as a certifying entity, or the existence of laws that are broad enough in scope to encompass certifying activities of the organization seeking accreditation; or evidence of support from state/provincial fire service organizations and/or other interested or affected organizations that are served by the organization seeking accreditation.

A-4-1.4.1 See A-3-1.5.

A-4-1.5 Examples of funding sources that a certifying entity might use to support the certification process are:

(a) Governmental appropriation: federal, state, county, local;

(b) Fee generation: fees charged for the certification process or membership in the system;

(c) Public or private grants;

(d) Fire service trust funds.

A-4-1.6.2 The record-keeping system required in this section should provide for easy retrieval of information. It could be either a hard copy or electronic (computerized) filing system.

A-4-1.9.1 It is not the intent of this standard to mandate the delegation of an entity's authority.

A-4-1.9.4 It is the intent of the committee that if certifying authority is to be delegated by an entity, that it not be delegated to organizations or entities that represent a broader geographical base or a broader constituency than the delegating entity.

A-4-1.10 See A-3-1.2.

A-4-2.1 The certifying entity should address, at a minimum, the following:

(a) By-laws and operational policies;

(b) Compliance with state/provincial and federally mandated standards: OSHA, EPA, Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA);

(c) Equal Employment Opportunities Act;

(d) Affirmative action policies;

(e) Americans with Disabilities Act; and

(f) Age Discrimination Employment Act.

A-4-2.3.1 The certifying entity is responsible for the safety of those individuals who participate in the examination process. To comply with this requirement of the standard, the entity should have a safety program that at a minimum meets the requirements of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*. As required in Section 2-5 of NFPA 1500, an individual meeting the requirements of NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*, should be assigned to oversee this program.

A-4-2.3.2 The protective clothing, apparatus, equipment, and facilities used in the evaluation of candidates should be in good repair and meet the requirements of the applicable NFPA standards.

A-4-2.4.1 The committee recognizes that for certain levels of certification a manipulative skills examination might not be appropriate. However, it is the opinion of the committee that manipulative skills examinations are required for most levels of certification.

A-4-2.4.7 Examinations should sample the various objectives contained in each professional qualifications standard. The sampling can be weighted to conform to the relative importance of a particular subject area.

A-4-2.4.8 Generally, objectivity can be increased if a manipulative skills testing checklist is used. The checklist should include each task that must be completed in order to successfully address the stated objective.

A-4-2.6 It is not the intent of this standard to mandate reciprocity. However, it is the committee's strong opinion that accredited entities should examine the credentials of individuals from other accredited entities to determine which level of certification, if any, is applicable.

A-4-2.7 The certifying entity should address, at a minimum, the following:

(a) Establishing a period of time for which a certification is valid, and

(b) Establishing procedures that address lapsed certification, and

(c) Identifying continuing education process, i.e., progression to next level of completion, and

(d) If time-limited certification, establishing recertification requirements and criteria, procedures, and administrative responsibilities.

A-4-2.9 The appeal procedures should address, at a minimum, the following:

(a) Method of notification/time period, and

(b) Personnel or agencies notified, e.g., appellant, fire chiefs/departments, and

(c) Response period, and

(d) Review process: hearing, communications, etc., and

(e) Final ruling, and

(f) Final notification of ruling.

Appendix B Accreditation and the Fire Service

This Appendix is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only.

The purpose of this Appendix is to give an overview of the concept of accreditation for institutions and/or programs. The outline covers a brief description of the activity and the process. The outcomes of accreditation are intended to ensure quality for the learner, the educational institution or program, and, ultimately, the public. Accreditation by a recognized accrediting body serves as a significant indicator that an institution and/or program is meeting established standards and stated objectives.

Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. For the most part, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs, and is conferred by nongovernmental bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to ensure the quality of the institution or program, and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program. Accreditation, which applies to institutions or programs, is to be distinguished from certification, which applies to individuals.

The bodies conducting institutional accreditation are national or regional in scope and comprise the institutions that have achieved and maintained accreditation. A specialized body conducting accreditation of a program preparing students for a profession or occupation is often closely associated with professional associations in the field.

Both institutional and specialized bodies conduct the accreditation process using a common pattern. The pattern requires integral self-study of the institution or program followed by an on-site visit by an evaluation team and a subsequent review and decision by a central governing group. Within this general pattern, the various accrediting bodies have developed a variety of individual procedures adapted to their own circumstances. Increasingly, attention has been given to education outcomes as a basis for evaluation.

A recognized accrediting body can be regarded as qualified to conduct evaluations of institutions and/or programs seeking accreditation, and accreditation by such bodies is generally recognized and accepted. Institutional or specialized accreditation cannot, however, guarantee the quality of individual graduates or of individual courses within an institution or program, but it can give reasonable assurance of the context and quality of the education offered.

An institutional accrediting body considers the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason, an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits but also to other such institutional characteristics as the student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength.

The accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general public that the institution:

- (a) Has appropriate purposes, and
- (b) Has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes, and
- (c) Can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes, and

(d) Gives reason to believe that it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Institutional improvement is encouraged by an accrediting body through the requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations seeking to identify what the institution does well, determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and developing plans to address needed improvements. While the granting of accreditation indicates an acceptable level of quality, an institution, however excellent, is capable of improvement, which must come from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Improvement is also encouraged by the accrediting body through its publications and through the advice and counsel provided by the visiting team, which comprises experienced educators drawn primarily from accredited institutions.

The focus of an institutional accrediting body on an institution as a total operating unit provides assurance that the general characteristics of the institution have been examined and found to be satisfactory. Institutional accreditation, concerned with evaluating the institution as a whole, does not seek to deal with any particular program in great detail, although programs are reviewed as a part of the consideration of the entire institution. Occasionally there are institutions offering but a single program ("free-standing" schools), which might seek institutional and/or specialized accreditation.

In fulfilling its two purposes, quality assurance and institutional and program improvement, accreditation provides service of value to several constituencies.

To the **public**, the values of accreditation include:

- (a) An assurance of external evaluation of the institution or program and a finding that there is conformity to general expectations in post-secondary education or the professional field;
- (b) An identification of institutions and programs that have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed toward improving the quality of the institution and its professional programs and are carrying them out successfully;
- (c) An improvement in the professional services available to the public, as accredited programs modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge and practice generally accepted in the field;
- (d) A decreased need for intervention by public agencies in the operations of educational institutions, since their institutions, through accreditation, are providing for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality.

To the **learners**, accreditation provides:

- (a) An assurance that the educational activities of an accredited institution or program have been found to be satisfactory, and therefore meet the needs of students;
- (b) Assistance in the transfer of credit or certification between institutions, or in the admission of students to advanced programs through the general acceptance of credits among accredited institutions where the performance of the student has been satisfactory and the credits to be transferred are appropriate to the receiving institution.

To the **institution**, accreditation provides:

- (a) The stimulus for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional and program improvement;

(b) The strengthening of institutional and program self-evaluation by the review and counsel provided through the accrediting body;

(c) The application of criteria of accrediting bodies, which helps guard against external encroachments harmful to institutional or program quality by providing benchmarks independent of forces that might impinge on individual institutions;

(d) The enhancing of the reputation of an accredited institution or program because of public regard for accreditation;

(e) One means by which an institution can gain eligibility for certain programs of governmental aid; accreditation is also usually relied on by private foundations as a highly desirable indicator of institutional and/or program quality.

Accreditation serves the **profession** by contributing to the unity of the profession by bringing together practitioners, teachers, and learners in an activity directed at improving preparation and professional practice.

Credits

The foregoing material is sourced from the *COPA Handbook on Accreditation*. The handbook should be consulted for more detailed information on the accreditation process. It is published annually by the Council on Post Secondary Accreditation, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.

Appendix C Referenced Publications

C-1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard for informational purposes only and thus are not considered part of the requirements of this document.

The edition indicated for each reference is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this document.

C-1.1 NFPA Publications. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

NFPA 472, *Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 473, *Standard for Competencies for EMS Personnel Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 600, *Standard on Industrial Fire Brigades*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1001, *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1002, *Standard for Fire Department Vehicle Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1003, *Standard for Airport Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, 1994 edition.

NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1031, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1035, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educator*, 1993 edition.

NFPA 1041, *Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 1992 edition.

NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*, 1992 edition.

C-1.2 COPA Publication. Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.

COPA Handbook on Accreditation, 1990 edition.