

OCT 1975

American Board Of Health Physics  
Savannah River Laboratory  
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TO: CERTIFIED HEALTH PHYSICISTS

For several years the American Board of Health Physics has been evaluating the need and practicality of periodic recertification. The purpose of this letter is to provide you background information on the Board's considerations and to ask your advice on how to proceed in the implementation of the recertification program.

Most boards originally certified professionals for life; however, this is no longer the rule. Many credentialing organizations now require or are planning periodic recertification. The recent emphasis on recertification results from the growing recognition inside and outside the professions that some individuals do not continue their career development after certification. These diplomates do not stay abreast of the phenomenally rapid advances in science and technology, and they become technically obsolete. According to some critics, if certification only demonstrates a high level of competence at one point in a professional's career and there is no follow-up by the credentialing organization to assure or even encourage maintenance of competence, then the value of certification to employers and other users of the diplomate's services may have been overstated.

Responding to the external pressures and the strong desire in the professions to regulate themselves, more and more certifying boards are taking steps to encourage the maintenance of the technical proficiency of their diplomates. The problem is not peculiar to a single profession or a group of professions. This is illustrated by the variety of certifying agencies in different areas that require or are planning recertification programs, such as the American Institute of Chemists, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, American Board of Family Practice, and the American Medical Technologists.

The most frequent argument against recertification is that the majority of diplomates stay alert to advances in their profession and require no prompting to continue their professional development, which is obviously correct. In balancing this argument against need to maintain the confidence of employers and the public in the utility and value of credentialing programs, certifying boards have generally judged the latter to be the more important. This argument, however, has influenced the structure of recertifications programs so that their aim is to motivate the minority of diplomates who would have a tendency to stagnate in their fields and, at the same time, to offer the majority an additional opportunity to continue their professional development.

In recredentially programs, any one of three methods is usually employed; sometimes these methods are combined. The first is retesting, i.e. taking an examination that tests the diplomate's knowledge of new advances in his field. Peer review is the second procedure. Periodically diplomates submit a resume of professional accomplishments (papers published, patents awarded, meetings attended, and general technical achievements). By reviewing the resume, the certifying agency judges the professional development of the diplomate. The third method quantitates professional development by assigning credits or points for such achievements as post-graduate courses completed, papers published, technical meetings attended, etc. A simplified version of this procedure, which is practiced widely, assigns credits only for professional courses or seminars.

At its July 1975 meeting, the American Board of Health Physics agreed on the principle of recertification for its diplomates. The Board reviewed the options (see following table) and decided to implement the requirement of a continuing education course (option 3c in the table).

<u>Options</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1. Re-examination	Severe burden for the relatively small ABHP to prepare and administer high quality exams for certification and recertification. Burdensome for diplomates to prepare continually for exams.
2. Peer Review	Most subjective of all evaluation techniques. Basis for recertification least exact.
3. Point Systems	
a. Comprehensive (credits for papers, reports, courses, meetings, etc.)	a. Equitable point system difficult to establish. Verification of credit claims problematic.
b. Continuing Education I (credits for meetings, seminars, and courses attended)	b. Difficult to establish professional value of individual meetings and courses.
c. Continuing Education II (credit for only ABHP-approved courses)	c. Involvement by ABHP in approval of courses.

The content of the courses and the lecturers shall be approved by the Board to assure high quality sessions. Organizations, such as universities and Health Physics Society chapters, may sponsor the courses, which shall be given at least once each year. The central theme of the courses shall be recent advances in the various areas of health physics. A typical course would concentrate on areas common to all health physics specialties on the first day. The second day would be devoted to new developments in the different specialties. An important aspect of the recertification program not decided yet is the frequency that the CHP's shall attend the course. Certifying boards with recertification programs usually require recredentiaing every 3 to 5 years. Another question still unresolved is the location of the courses (for example, should the courses be held in conjunction with the annual Health Physics Society meeting?).

represents the amount received in subscriptions from CHPs during the year. Due to the increased exam costs associated with the expanded exam and the need for a larger Part I "Bank", the Board decided to request support from the CHPs for at least one more year.

6. Part I - Eligibility Change

The Board approved changes in the eligibility requirements for those taking Part I only, eliminating the age requirement and allowing completion of an MS Academic Program to satisfy previous experience requirements.

7. ABHP Brochure

M. Terpilak and H. Greenhouse have completed an ABHP informational brochure which will be distributed to CHPs.

8. NRC Standards for Power Reactor HPs

NRC Standards for Power Reactor HPs (as listed in Regulatory Guide 8.8) have been a topic of discussion of an ACRS subcommittee, the NRC, an ANSI Standards Committee, and the ABHP for some time. These discussions are continuing and should result in a satisfactory program, insuring a high level of competence in this important area of Health Physics.

9. Board Elections

Board elections resulted in the following appointments for CY 1976:

W. C. Reinig	- Chairman
B. L. Rich	- Secretary-Treasurer
M. S. Terpilak	- Member
S. D. Vickers	- Member
D. S. Meyers	- Chairman, Panel of Examiners
N. A. Greenhouse	- Vice Chairman, Panel of Examiners