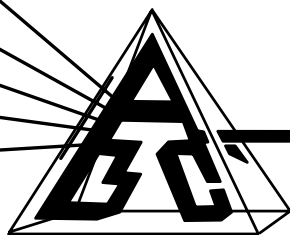


Official Publication
of the American Board
of Criminalistics

P.O. Box 1123
Wausau, WI 54402-
1123

Registrar e-mail:
abcereg@dwave.net

Web Site:



Certification News

Special Issue - Winter 1999

PERSPECTIVE MEMBER NEWSLETTER INSERT

Give This Section to a Prospective Member

What is ABC certification?

Certification is a voluntary process designed and developed by practicing criminalists, by which a practitioner is recognized as having attained the professional qualifications necessary to practice in one or more disciplines of criminalistics. The American Board of Criminalistics offers a certificate of professional competency in criminalistics, as well as further certification in the specially disciplines of forensic biology, drug analysis, fire debris analysis, and trace evidence examination.

A "certification eligible" category—ABC Affiliate—recognizes candidates for certification who have met all of the requirements for certification except the required minimum two years of full-time laboratory experience.

How does ABC certification help me?

ABC certification allows the examiner to document that his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities have been successfully tested by an independent agency. Because ABC certification demonstrates achievement of a professional standard, it can assist the court in evaluating an examiner's

qualifications. Additionally, having certified employees allows a laboratory director to demonstrate the effectiveness of training programs for purposes of accreditation. Increasingly, laboratory directors take certification into account when considering individuals for hiring, promotion, and salary increases.

How does certification help the forensic science profession?

ABC certification fulfills the forensic science community's obligation to:

- □ establish professional levels of knowledge, skills and abilities;
- □ define a mechanism for achieving those levels;
- □ recognize those who have demonstrated attainment of those levels;
- □ provide guidelines for the development of educational curricula;
- □ demonstrate professional qualification to users such as lawyers, investigators and citizens;
- □ promote growth within the profession.

What is ABC certification and why should I care?

How Does the Certification Process Work?

What are the requirements for certification?

Applications must possess a minimum of an earned Baccalaureate degree in a natural science or an appropriately related field. Applicants must also have at least two years full-time experience in a forensic science laboratory and be employed in a professional capacity engaged in the examination of physical evidence, interpretation of data, and/or technical consultation for litigation purposes. In addition, all applicants must agree to abide by the ABC rules of professional conduct, and submit two references who can attest to the qualifications and integrity of the applicant. An applicant may qualify for Affiliate status prior to attaining the minimum two years of full-time experience.

How much does certification cost?

The nonrefundable application fee is \$30.00. Sitting for the General Knowledge Examination costs \$150.00. Sitting for a Specialty Examination costs \$100.00. (Many employers pay the costs for their employees to become certified.) The annual maintenance fee for certification is \$30.00.

The ABC Board of Directors keeps costs as low as possible. All members of the Board and Examinations Committee serve as volunteers. The only paid employee of the ABC is the Registrar who is a part-time contractor.

How do I prepare to sit for an ABC examination?

The ABC provides individual Study Guides for the General Knowledge Examination and for each Specialty Examination offered. Study Guides consist

of a listing of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) required, a bibliography of appropriate study materials, and sample test questions.

In addition, valuable insight is gained through on-the-job experience in a forensic laboratory. While it is possible to pass the GKE without having worked in the laboratory, analysis of test scores has demonstrated significantly higher success rates on the GKE for more experienced practitioners.

What is the passing score? How is it determined?

All ABC examinations are designed so that the candidates who correctly answer 80% of the questions will pass the exam. For the General Knowledge Examination, the passing score of 80% was determined by statistical analysis of all test takers prior to 1996. As in many examinations, there was a "natural break" between the people who passed the examination and the people that did not. This use of a natural break to determine a passing score is well accepted among testing and certification professionals

What percentage of candidates pass the examination?

Of the first approximately 375 individuals who have taken the General Knowledge Examination, approximately 75% have passed

How long after I sit for an

When you achieve certification, the ABC encourages you to use

D- ABC for Diplomate
and
F-ABC for Fellow

Let these marks of distinction bring you recognition for the effort you put into meeting the certification challenge.

examination will I be notified of my test results?

Examinees are generally notified of their test results within 90 days. For economic reasons, groups of answer sheets from examination sittings during a particular season may be held and submitted together for machine grading. The ABC is working on ways to decrease the time between exam sitting and the notification of results.

What happens if I fail the examination?

The practical outcome if an applicant fail the GKE or a Specialty Examination is that the applicant may apply to retake the examination after a six-month waiting period. Feedback is provided by the ABC to help the applicant understand the areas of weakness identified through the test, and to guide the applicant in studying for the retest.

Who has access to ABC records?

There is an understandable concern that even if a candidate passes the test, adverse counsel may attempt to discredit a witness by pointing out questions that were missed. It is the ABC's belief that attaining certification is a major professional achievement, and that maintaining records of incorrect answers would have the potential to detract from that achievement. For this reason, **the ABC does not make the results of anyone's tests available to anyone other than the examinee.** Sixty days after the examination is conducted, the actual test materials are destroyed, and only the pass/fail status is recorded by the ABC.

While the "discovery" of information related to the certification of a practitioner is possible, it would fall under the same rules for all other data related to a practitioner's qualifications. Other than stating whether an individual is certified, the ABC will give out no information from its files.

ABC CALENDAR

PLEASE POST ON YOUR LAB BULLETIN BOARD

Date/Deadline	Event	For More Information, Contact:
February 23, 2000 <i>Deadline December 21, 1999</i>	All ABC Exams, AAFS Meeting John Ascuagas Nugget Hotel Reno, Nevada	Mike Haas 715/845-3684
March 1, 2000	Deadline for receipt of Receritification Data (without late fee)	
April 3, 2000 <i>Deadline February 3, 2000</i>	All ABC Exams, Special Offering Indiana State Police, Indianapolis, Indiana	Dan Bergman 651/642-0700
May 3, 2000 <i>Deadline March 3, 2000</i>	All ABC Exams, MAAFS Meeting Ceasar's, Atlantic City, New Jersey	Ted Anderson 301/319-0272
May 13, 2000 <i>Deadline March 13, 2000</i>	All ABC Exams, CAC Meeting Embassy Suites, Napa, California	Jennifer Mihalovich 510/238-3386
July 1, 2000	Deadline for receipt of Receritification Data (with a \$10.00 late fee)	

To arrange to sit for an examination, you must contact the Registrar by letter or fax (715-845-4156) by the deadline listed.

Local contacts are provided for conference information only.

To arrange for ABC Exams to be administered in your laboratory, contact your regional representative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

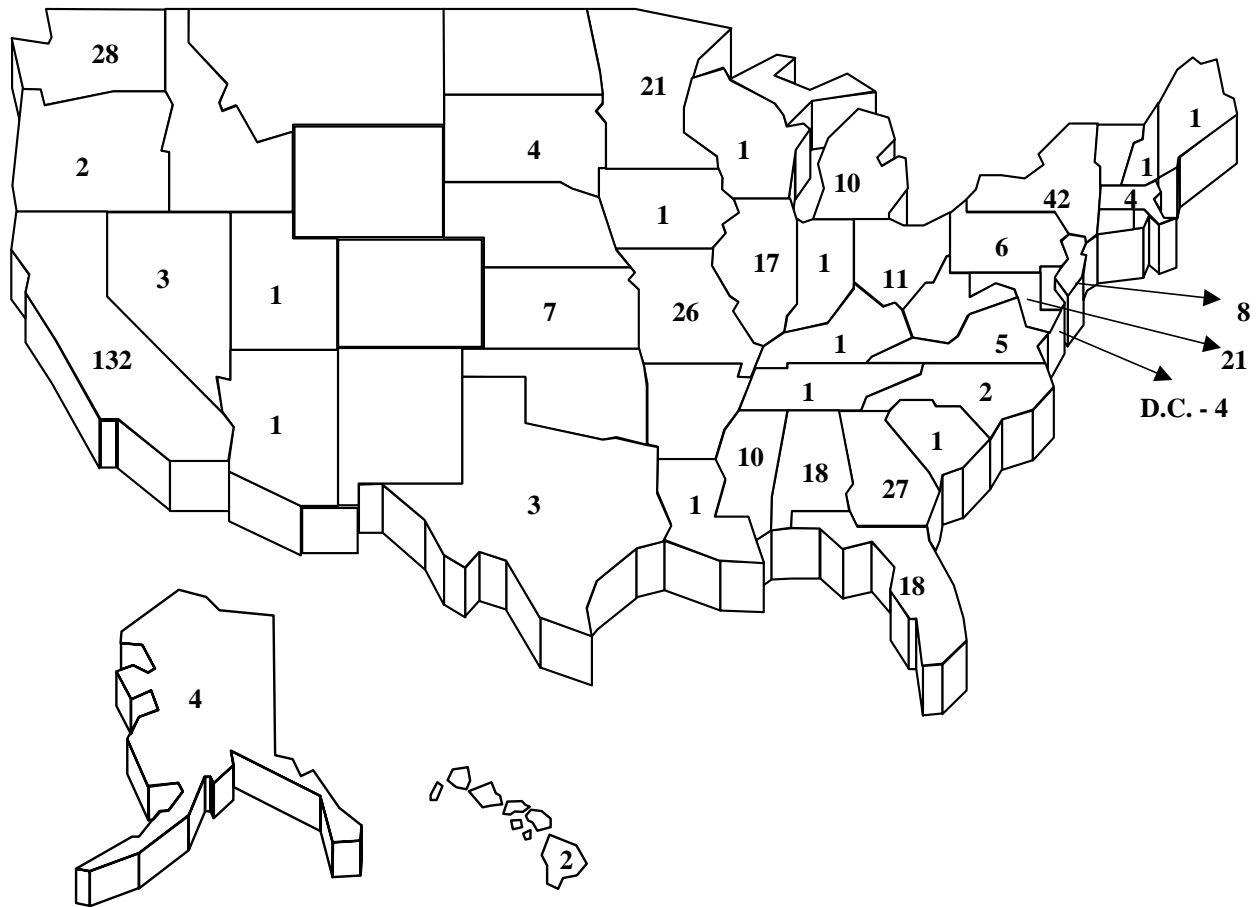
Regarding the certification process or the ABC, please contact your regional representative or the ABC Registrar. If you don't know who your representative is, the ABC Registrar can provide you with his or her name and phone number.

The Registrar can be reached at 715/845-3684.

If you are on-line, you can download information from the ABC's Home Page at www.criminalistics.com/ABC. The Website contains a detailed description of ABC operations, a list of officers, the current Directory of Diplomates, Fellows, and Affiliates, Study Guides, and more.

Distribution of ABC Diplomates

As of 7/19/99



Diplomates Outside of the United States

Italy – 1

Manitoba – 1

United Kingdom – 7