



CAQ Non Exam Policies, Procedures and Authorization

Eligibility:

- NCCPA evaluates applications for the Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) program without regard to age, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or disability.
- Eligibility criteria for each CAQ program are provided in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#) published on NCCPA's website.
- **NCCPA does not waive any eligibility requirements.**
- **It is the responsibility of the physician assistant registering for a CAQ to read and meet the requirements of the CAQ for which he/she is registering. If NCCPA determines that an ineligible individual is registered for the CAQ program, took a CAQ exam, or earned a CAQ, eligibility and exam scores, if applicable, for the CAQ will be rescinded.**
- Only those physician assistants who are currently certified by NCCPA with the designation of PA-C are eligible to earn or maintain a CAQ. Other eligibility criteria, as specified in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#), must also be met.
- Physician assistants may be registered for more than one CAQ program at a time.
- Physician assistants must provide information on all licenses and federal privileges to practice that are held by the physician assistant, and the licenses and federal privileges must be in compliance with the criteria listed in the eligibility section of the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#). The status of all licenses and federal privileges to practice will be verified by NCCPA. A physician assistant registering for the CAQ process agrees to provide NCCPA with any and all requested information and the authority to request and receive further information to verify the license and/or federal privilege status. If, for any reason, the license and/or federal privilege to practice cannot be verified by NCCPA, the physician assistant may be deemed ineligible for the CAQ program.
- Physician assistants must continue to meet all eligibility criteria for the CAQ, including current NCCPA certification and all licensure/privilege requirements, throughout the entire time in which they earn and maintain the CAQ. Requirements for notifying NCCPA of the changes to licensure and/or privilege to practice information are provided in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#).
- Certified, eligible physician assistants have six years from the date NCCPA receives the first submittal for one of the non-exam requirements for the Certificate of Added Qualifications and the administrative fee within which to complete the program, including passing the exam and, should they not complete the program within that six-year period, they will need to begin the process anew by resubmitting all requirements and a new administrative fee.

Specialty Continuing Medical Education (CME) Procedures:

- Physician assistants must attest that they have earned the required Category 1 CME credits for the relevant CAQ within the designated timeframe. These requirements are detailed in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#) and in the *Appendix* of the policy.
- Although documentation of the hours is not required as part of the attestation process, physician assistants who are selected for an audit must provide NCCPA with documentation of the CME requirement. Additional information on the audit is provided in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#).

Specialty Experience Procedures:

- Physician assistants must attest that they have earned the required number of experience hours for the CAQ for which they are applying. The specific number of hours for each CAQ is listed in the *Appendix* of the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#).
- Although documentation of the hours is not required as part of the attestation process, physician assistants who are selected for an audit must provide NCCPA with documentation of the required hours of experience in the relevant specialty. Additional information on the audit is provided in the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#).

Specialty Procedure/Patient Case Procedures:

- Both the physician assistant and a physician, lead/senior physician assistant, or physician/physician assistant post graduate program director who works in the specialty and is familiar with the physician assistant's practice and experience must provide attestations that the physician assistant has the appropriate knowledge and skills needed for practice in the specialty, and that the physician assistant has performed the procedures and patient management relevant to the practice setting and/or understands how and when the procedures should be performed. Information on the specific recommendations for each specialty is provided in the *Appendix* of the [Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program](#).
- Physician assistants must provide this required attestation through the online registration process. For the attestation of PA's knowledge and skills, a form may be downloaded from the registration screen, printed, and provided to the physician, lead/senior physician assistant, or physician/physician assistant post graduate program director to complete and return to NCCPA. The completed and signed attestation of PA's knowledge and skills may be returned to NCCPA by mail, fax, or emailed as a scanned electronic document. It is the physician assistant's responsibility to assure that the physician, lead/senior physician assistant, or physician/physician assistant post graduate program director submits the required attestation to NCCPA. NCCPA reserves the right to contact the physician, lead/senior physician assistant, or physician/physician assistant post graduate program director to verify the authenticity of the attestation document and signature.
- The procedure/patient case requirement will not be considered complete until the physician assistant attestation and the attestation of PA's knowledge and skills have been received.

Financial Policies (Fees, Withdrawals, Transfers, Cancellations, & Refunds):

- All fees must be paid in U.S. funds and must accompany your CAQ registration and/or exam application.

- There are two fees associated with earning a CAQ. An administrative fee is due at the beginning of the CAQ process, when you submit attestation or documentation of the first non-exam requirement for the CAQ. An exam fee is due when you apply for the CAQ exam.
- Applicants are required to pay the difference in exam application fees if they transfer to a timeframe that requires additional fees.
- **NCCPA's acceptance of payment does not imply eligibility for the CAQ program or exam.**
- Your CAQ registration and/or exam application will not receive final approval until payment for all current, outstanding, and past due fees have been received by NCCPA. Any additional fees incurred between the time the application is processed and the time your score becomes available must be paid before NCCPA will release exam results.
- **If you wish to cancel or withdraw your CAQ registration you must do so in writing to NCCPA within 30 days of registration. Failure to request the withdrawal in writing to NCCPA within that timeframe will result in the forfeiture of your entire registration fee, and you must resubmit the entire registration fee if you apply for a CAQ in the future.**
- Refunds will be issued directly to the party who paid the fee.
- NCCPA will assess a \$35 service charge for all returned checks, declined credit cards and credit card charge backs. Further, your CAQ registration and/or exam application will not receive final approval until all payments due and service charges have been paid.

Irregular Behavior:

- NCCPA defines irregular behavior as any behavior that, in the sole discretion of the NCCPA, undermines or threatens the integrity or validity of any part of the registration, assessment of eligibility, examination or any other process of NCCPA, whether it occurs before, during or after an application, assessment, exam or other process. *Policy and Procedures for Disciplinary Matters* describes the disciplinary actions that may be taken based on irregular behavior.
- **Nothing in this policy shall limit or prevent NCCPA from imposing sanctions as set forth in its *Policy and Procedures for Disciplinary Matters*.**
- Irregular behavior includes, but is not limited to, having or seeking access to exam materials before the exam, impersonating an examinee or engaging someone else to take the exam by proxy, copying answers from someone else or allowing one's answers to be copied, making notes during a computer-based exam administration, copying or memorizing and reproducing test items, altering or misrepresenting scores, stealing exam materials, possessing unauthorized materials during a computer-based exam (e.g., including, but not limited to, recording devices, photographic materials, reference material, etc.) or other such behavior which may cast doubt on the exam results of that or another person. It also includes making false representations during the application process or in connection with a physician assistant's certification or CAQ status; altering or falsifying any NCCPA document; making a false representation that one is certified by NCCPA or has earned a CAQ issued by NCCPA; or illegitimately using the legally-protected marks, PA-C® or Physician Assistant-Certified®.
- The content of the exams administered by NCCPA, and each of their items, is proprietary and strictly confidential, and the unauthorized retention, possession, copying, distribution,

disclosure, discussion, or receipt of any examination question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral, or other form of communication, including but not limited to emailing, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, before, during, or after an examination is **strictly prohibited**. In addition to constituting irregular behavior subject to disciplinary action such as revocation of certification or CAQs, revocation of eligibility for future certification or CAQs, and disciplinary fines, such activities violate NCCPA's proprietary rights, including copyrights, and may subject violators to legal action resulting in monetary damages.

- **Exam applicants or examinees can be disqualified from taking an examination, continuing to sit for an examination, receiving examination scores, or sitting for any future examination, and may be required to retake an examination if, at its sole discretion, the NCCPA determines through observation, statistical analysis or any other means available to it, that said exam applicants or examinees were engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other irregular behavior before, during the administration of, or following, the examination, or if the NCCPA determines that the integrity or validity of the examination is otherwise in question.**
- **In some instances, while the evidence of irregularity is sufficiently strong to cast doubt upon the validity of scores, such evidence may not enable NCCPA to identify the particular individuals involved. In any such circumstances, NCCPA reserves the right to withhold the scores of all candidates, including candidates not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, to require all candidates to take an additional examination at a later date under conditions which will ensure the validity of all scores. Such determination is at the sole discretion of the NCCPA.**
- Anyone who has information or evidence that irregular behavior has occurred should submit a written, signed statement to NCCPA detailing the incident, with copies of any supporting evidence or documentation.
- If NCCPA determines that allegations of irregular behavior are true, it will impose sanctions against the offending individual, which may include temporary or permanent loss of eligibility for exams, certification and CAQs; revocation of an existing certification and CAQs; suspension of certification and CAQs; invalidation of scores; fines or other sanctions as deemed appropriate by NCCPA. Such sanctions may include legal action against the offending individual.

Appeals:

If you disagree with an adverse NCCPA decision or the application of an NCCPA policy, you have the right to seek review of that decision or to seek consideration of a policy exception by making a written and signed request with appropriate supporting documentation to NCCPA. Upon receipt of the request, NCCPA will make a decision on the request and provide you with a written notice of the decision. If the decision is adverse, you will be provided with a copy of the *Review and Appeal Policies and Procedures*, which describes the process for requesting further review of the decision. If further consideration is desired, the Request for Review must be filed within 30 days after the date of notice of the adverse decision.

Information Disclosure:

- **Third Party Requests:** Upon the request of a third party, the NCCPA will verify whether an individual is currently certified, the NCCPA certification number assigned to that PA, the date of initial or regained certification, the date of certification expiration, and whether the individual has any Certificate(s) of Added Qualifications. If a PA has already completed the requirements

for the current certification maintenance cycle and is only awaiting the issuance of a new certificate, the NCCPA is also authorized to disclose that those requirements have been met and the expiration date of the next certification cycle. In addition, NCCPA will disclose PANCE scores to the PA's educational program via the secured NCCPA Program Portal.

- **Compliance with Federal and State Laws:** NCCPA shall disclose information as may be required for the purpose of compliance with state or federal laws, court orders or military deployment information requirements without the authorization of the individual physician assistant or applicant for certification.
- **Disciplinary Review/Appeals:** In cases reviewed under NCCPA's *Policy and Procedures for Disciplinary Matters* and/or the *Review and Appeal Policies and Procedures*, after a final adverse disciplinary decision has been reached, NCCPA may notify interested parties of the adverse disciplinary decision and the underlying facts thereof as deemed appropriate by NCCPA. Such notification may be given to the Federation of State Medical Boards, any state licensing authority with which the physician assistant holds a license to practice as a physician assistant, the federal government, the physician assistant's employer and other interested parties, including individuals seeking information about the individual's certification status.
- **Research:** NCCPA may also use or disclose de-identified information about individual PAs in aggregate (unidentifiable) format, for purposes of statistical analysis and research. Release of any additional information to a third party shall be contingent upon the written and signed authorization of the individual physician assistant or applicant for NCCPA certification. The PA Professional Profile survey instrument has been deemed exempt from IRB review pursuant to the terms of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Policy for Protection of Human Research Subjects at 45 C.F.R. §46.101(b).

General:

- NCCPA has established policies and procedures to govern its PA-C and CAQ programs to attempt to ensure that no physician assistant participating in the programs receives an unfair advantage or disadvantage. Efforts are made to ensure that the programs are administered in compliance with the governing policies and the procedures developed for each program. However, if the integrity of a program is jeopardized, NCCPA reserves the right to invalidate the PA-C or CAQ credential or take other appropriate action.
- Only physician assistants who hold a valid NCCPA certification may use the designations, Physician Assistant-Certified® and PA-C®. Both designations are legally protected certification marks over which NCCPA exercises exclusive control. Only physician assistants who hold a valid PA-C credential are eligible to earn and maintain a CAQ. Allowing your NCCPA certification to expire will result in the loss of your eligibility to earn a CAQ and/or the revocation of any and all CAQs that you hold.
- NCCPA certification or a CAQ does not confer any property or contractual rights on any individual regarding continued or future certification, CAQ, or exam eligibility.
- NCCPA amends its policies from time to time, and candidates for certification, recertification, certification maintenance, CAQ, or maintenance of a CAQ must comply with NCCPA policies in effect at the time to maintain an NCCPA credential.

- To ensure receipt of all NCCPA-related materials in a timely fashion, you must notify NCCPA—in writing, by email or by signing in to your personal certification record online—of any name, email, or address changes, whether or not the U.S. Postal service is also notified. Notification of a name change must be accompanied by a signed statement and a light, enlarged photocopy of your current driver's license or passport with your correct name. **It is solely your responsibility to keep NCCPA apprised of all name, email, or postal address changes.** Failure to do so promptly may result in delays in receiving information. **Failure to comply with an NCCPA exam-related or other requirement will not be excused on the grounds that a name, email, or postal address has been changed unless acceptable and timely notice of such change was received by the NCCPA.**

Affirmation and Authorization

I hereby register to begin the process of earning an NCCPA CAQ as a physician assistant in accordance with and subject to the procedures and regulations of the NCCPA. I have read and agree to the conditions set forth in the NCCPA's *Governing Policies Regarding the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program* and the *Procedures for the Certificate of Added Qualifications Program*; and other applicable NCCPA policies. I agree to disqualification from examination; to denial or revocation of NCCPA Certification/Recertification or any NCCPA CAQ; to denial of future eligibility for Certification/Recertification or any NCCPA CAQ; and to forfeiture and redelivery of any NCCPA credential granted me by the NCCPA if any of the statements or answers made by me in this application are false or if I violate any of the rules or regulations governing an NCCPA credential or program.

I authorize the NCCPA to make whatever inquiries and investigations it deems necessary to verify my credentials, my professional standing, and my identity. I understand that this application and any information or material received or generated by the NCCPA in connection with my CAQ or with my Certification or Recertification will be kept confidential and will not be released except as follows: (1) the fact that I am or am not, or have or have not been, Certified or Recertified, my certification number, and the relevant dates, are matters of public record and may be disclosed; (2) the fact that I have or have not earned a CAQ in a particular specialty, and the relevant dates, are matters of public record and may be disclosed; (3) information will be released if I have authorized such release or such release is required by law; (4) my PANCE examination score(s) will be released to the authorized representatives of my Physician Assistant Educational Program, and to state licensing agencies; (5) disciplinary actions will be reported to state licensing agencies, to the Federation of State Medical Boards, and to other parties deemed appropriate by the NCCPA; and (6) my address and other identifying information may be exchanged with the American Academy of Physician Assistants and my Physician Assistant Educational Program. Further, I allow the NCCPA to use information from my application and subsequent examination for the purposes of research and statistical analysis, provided that my personal identification with that information has been deleted.

I understand that the content of NCCPA's exams and each of their items are proprietary and strictly confidential, and that the unauthorized retention, possession, copying, distribution, disclosure, discussion, or receipt of any examination question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral or other form of communication, including but not limited to emailing, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, before, during, or after an examination, is **strictly prohibited**. I further understand that, in addition to constituting irregular behavior subject to disciplinary action such as denial or revocation of the PA-C certification and the Certificate of Added Qualifications, denial or revocation of eligibility for future PA-C certification and the Certificate of Added Qualifications, and disciplinary fines, such activities violate the NCCPA's proprietary rights, including copyrights, and may subject me to legal action resulting in monetary damages. I further

understand that I can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination, or from receiving examination scores, and that I may be required to retake an examination if, at its sole discretion, the **NCCPA** determines through proctor observation, statistical analysis or any other means available to it, that I was engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other irregular behavior before, during the administration of, or following, the examination, or if the **NCCPA** determines that the integrity or validity of the examination otherwise is in question.

I further understand that, in some instances, while the evidence of irregularity is sufficiently strong to cast doubt upon the validity of scores, such evidence may not enable NCCPA to identify the particular individuals involved. In any such circumstances, I understand that NCCPA reserves the right to withhold the scores of all candidates, including candidates not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, to require all candidates to take an additional examination at a later date under conditions which will ensure the validity of all scores.

I hereby agree to hold the NCCPA, its officers, directors, examiners, employees, and agents, harmless from any complaint, claim, or damage arising out of any action or omission by any of them in connection with this application; the application process; any examination given by the NCCPA; any grade or credential relating thereto; the failure to issue me any credential; or any demand for forfeiture or redelivery of such credential. Notwithstanding the above, should I file suit against the NCCPA, I agree that any such action shall be governed by and construed under the laws of the State of Georgia without regard to conflicts of law. I further agree that any such action shall be brought in the applicable Court of Fulton County in the State of Georgia, or the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia; I consent to the jurisdiction of such state and federal courts; and I agree that the venue of such courts is proper. I further agree that, should I not prevail in any such action, the NCCPA shall be entitled to all costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred in connection with the litigation.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DECISION AS TO WHETHER I QUALIFY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ADDED QUALIFICATIONS RESTS SOLELY AND EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE NCCPA AND THAT THE DECISION OF THE NCCPA IS FINAL.