10 QUESTIONS

TO DISCUSS WITH A PSYCHOMETRICIAN

BEFORE APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION

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The implementation and documentation of exam development activities plays an essential part in the third-party accreditation process. A strong partnership between the certifying organization and its psychometric vendor, or consultant, helps create a realistic exam development and maintenance plan consistent with accreditation requirements and best practice.

Right from the start, engage your pscyhometrician as a partner in the organization's goal to achieve accreditation. This enables the psychometrician to propose the appropriate scope of services, including required reporting and ocumentation. It also helps the certifying organization ensure selection of an individual or team with the necessary experience and familiarity with the selected accreditation standard.

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Strong program policies are the backbone of successful certification programs. One of the critical ways organizations putpolicies into action is through a psychometrically sound certification exam process (including development, maintenance, administration, and scoring). For this reason, asking the psychometrician to review the program's exam development policies helps ensure policies reflect best practice, accurately capture the processes used, and build a joint understanding between the psychometrician and program managers.

Learning the "ins and outs" of the accreditation process and related exam development requirements takes time. Start with *SeaCrest's Top 10 Questions* certifying organizations should discuss with their psychometrician as they work towards the goal of achieving accreditation.

10 QUESTIONS
TO DISCUSS WITH A PSYCHOMETRICIAN

1. DO OUR SME PANELS SUFFICIENTLY REPRESENT OUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

- Ensure there are enough SMEs participating in each phase of the exam development cycle.

- Ensure SME panels are varied, both across tasks and over time.

- Ensure SME panels are broad and representative of the community of certificants and potential certificants. Consider demographics relevant to your audience, such as: geographic region, employer type/size, job role, practice setting, education/credentials, years of experience, etc.

2. HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE CREATE NEW EXAM FORM(S)?

- Increase security and limit item exposure by considering candidate volume, the retesting policy, the number of active forms, and other factors.

3. CAN OUR ITEM BANK SUPPORT OUR EXAM FORM DEVELOPMENT NEEDS?

- Ensure there are enough items available to support new form development and limit item overexposure.

- Develop a schedule to expand the item bank that meets the needs of the exam development timetable and the retest policy.

4. DOES OUR RETESTING POLICY BALANCE CANDIDATE NEEDS WITH APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS?

- Develop a rationale for the retesting policy based on the rate of new form development, number of active forms, candidate volume, and other factors.

- Consider the valuable insight offered by your psychometrician into appropriate retesting limits (time between attempts, number of attempts, etc.) for allowing candidates to retake the exam.

5. SHOULD WE INCLUDE PRETEST ITEMS ON THE EXAM?

- Pretest items allow a program to test the performance of newly developed items before they are included as scored items.

- Discuss how pretest items can support equating needs and assist with new form development.

6. WHAT EQUATING PLAN BEST FITS OUR PROGRAM?

- While a cut score study establishes the passing score of the base form (the first form created from new/revised exam specifications developed after a job analysis study), accreditation standards require that programs use a psychometrically sound equating method to determine the passing score of subsequent exam forms.

7. HAVE WE DOCUMENTED THE RATIONALE FOR THE: JOB ANALYSIS TIME FRAME, JOB ANALYSIS SURVEY SAMPLING PLAN, RELIABILITY METHOD, EQUATING METHOD, ETC.?

- NCCA accreditation standards require detailed rationales be developed and documented for many program decisions, including exam development considerations.

- The psychometric consultant can help facilitate discussion amongst SME panels, certification boards, and staff to develop strong rationales for exam development decisions.

8. DOES OUR SCORE REPORT PROVIDE USEFUL GUIDANCE TO CANDIDATES REGARDING INTERPRETING RESULTS AND DOMAIN-LEVEL INFORMATION?

- Many programs choose to provide candidates who fail the exam with domain or content-level feedback on the score report. If domain-level information is provided, programs must also help candidates understand the information, how to interpret it, and limitations of the data provided.

9. WHAT EXAM DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES SHOULD WE PLAN FOR IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

- Accreditation standards (and best practice) require ongoing exam development. Work with your psychometrician to outline an exam development calendar and plan future exam development activities.

- Ensure the contract and scope of work includes all necessary phases of exam maintenance and supporting documentation (if outsourced to a vendor): job analysis and exam specifications, standard setting, item development, scoring, new form development, equating, and technical/test analysis reporting.

10. WE OFFER A PERFORMANCE EXAM. IS THE EXAM DEVELOPMENT AND GRADING PROCESS SUFFICIENTLY DOCUMENTED?

- There are several accreditation requirements specific to performance exams that require careful design and additional documentation including development of the grading rubric as well as rater selection and evaluation.

Preparing to apply for accreditation provides an opportunity for overall program improvement and quality assurance. Building a strong, well-developed exam development process with a psychometrician results in a better certification program that is ready to embark on the journey towards earning accreditation. Using these questions to jump-start conversations with your test development partner helps ensure your program's needs are met while building accreditation compliance. Contact SeaCrest at _callen@seacrestcompany.com_ to learn more.