

Certification Maintenance

On Friday, April 13, 2007, the AICP Commission approved a plan for Certification Maintenance. All three motions in this document passed unanimously. Here are the details of the program:

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1.0 Certification Standards: Introduction

1.1 Why Certification Maintenance

Our communities are constantly changing and so, too, is the planning profession. New theories, new laws, new planning tools and techniques — all are available to planners as we define and guide community change. The Commission of the American Institute of Certified Planners (the Commission) believes that planners, to be credible professionals, must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to remain current in the practice of planning. The Commission believes that planners should demonstrate professional credibility through continuing education and should follow professional certification standards that are similar to those of other professional organizations, including planning organizations in other countries.

1.2 The Authority to Set Standards

The Articles of Incorporation of the American Planning Association, Article Four, provide the authority for the AICP Commission to set standards for certification: "...The qualifications for certification by and membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners, professional ethics, professional standards, educational requirement for certification, advocacy in behalf of professional planners and all other matters of qualification, experience and training of and for professional planners shall be determined solely by the Commission of American Institute of Certified Planners, which shall consist of members of the Institute elected to office from among the candidates nominated by the Institute pursuant to the Bylaws of the Institute."

1.3 The Commission's Process

After several years of discussion among the Commission, other APA components, and members, two draft proposals of Certification Maintenance were posted for member comments by the Commission. One month-long comment period began on December 6, 2006, and a second one began on February 21, 2007. The AICP Commission conducted four in-person working sessions over the course of 10 months to deliberate over the details of Certification Maintenance: in July 2006, November 2006, January 2007 and April 2007. In addition, the Commission held several conference calls to discuss CM.

The Commission prepared the CM proposals based, in part, on staff research of the certification maintenance standards of other professional organizations, and in large part on member comments received.

APA received expert legal counsel on the second CM draft and with respect to comments received from members and professional development providers. As a result of the advice received, in addition to the member responses posted on the second draft, the following major changes are addressed in this third CM draft:

1.3.1 APA/AICP must set clear standards on certification maintenance.

1.3.2 It is fair and equitable that all providers of professional development be held to the standards that are established.

1.3.3 APA/AICP may establish a professional development registration process that ensures that the standards set are met. It is fair and appropriate for APA/AICP to introduce registration fees to cover the costs of the program.

1.3.4 All providers must follow the registration procedures, including APA entities.

1.3.5 The self-directed/unregistered provider provision of credit acquisition should be eliminated because such credit acquisition cannot be assured to maintain the standards established and cannot be evaluated against objective criteria. (Online and correspondence opportunities are acceptable as long as they meet the established standards.)

1.3.6 An appeal process be established whereby providers of professional development whose courses are not approved for CM may receive a fair hearing on their appeal.

1.3.7 The minimum credit requirement for a two-year reporting period may be modified.

1.3.8 Additional avenues are provided for university professors in meeting their own Certifications Maintenance requirements.

2.0 Certification Maintenance Program I: Program Overview

2.1 Certification Maintenance (CM) Requirements for Certified Planners

MOTION:

That the AICP Commission approve the publication of the following proposed amendment to the AICP Bylaws, to institute the maintenance of AICP certification through a minimum standard of continuing education (language to be inserted is underlined):

AICP Bylaws — Section 2.34 — Membership: Certification Maintenance. Members shall be required to abide by continuing education requirements as established by the Commission through the standards of Certification Maintenance.

MOTION:

That the AICP Commission approve the publication of the following proposed amendment to the AICP Bylaws (language to be inserted is underlined):

AICP Bylaws — Section 2.35 — Membership: Certification Maintenance Standards. Certified planners are required to take professional development courses throughout their careers in a program of Certification Maintenance (CM). The reporting period for Certification Maintenance will be established by the Commission and will be in the range of every one to three years. The annual average number of credits required will be established by the Commission and will be in the range of twelve to twenty-four credits.

3.0 Certification Maintenance Program II: Program Details

3.1 Certification Maintenance (CM) Requirements for Certified Planners

Within each two-year period, AICP certified planners will be required to engage in at least 32 credits of eligible professional development activities.

Each two-year period begins on January 1.

No minimum number of credits need be logged per year so long as 32 qualifying credits are logged in during each two-year reporting period.

A four-month grace period, beyond the two-year reporting cycle, may be used to complete the Certification Maintenance credit requirements. Any credits used in a grace period cannot be double counted towards the next reporting cycle. A maximum of 16 excess credits can be carried over to the next reporting cycle.

If AICP Certification Maintenance requirements are not met within four years, an AICP member will lose

AICP certification and will be obliged to seek recertification in order to retain the AICP credential. See Section 3.5 for exemptions and waivers.

3.2 Achieving CM Credit Requirements

Thirty-two eligible credits will be reported in a two-year period and will be achieved in the following way:

All 32 credits may be earned from APA, APA-sponsored, PAB graduate degree courses or registered providers.

- Volunteer, unpaid planning instruction may qualify when carried out through these mechanisms. Certification Maintenance credit may be earned only once for teaching a particular course or seminar or for presenting a professional paper. The amount of credit equals the length of the presentation in hours plus one hour for preparation.
- Qualifying credits that satisfy the continuing education needs of another professional association can be counted for both Certification Maintenance and the other association's continuing education requirements.
- Faculty holding tenured or tenure-track positions in an accredited university may qualify for CM credit for the publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal approved by APA/AICP and using a double-blind review process. The amount of credit is four hours per article.

A minimum of 1.5 credits will be on the topic of ethics. These credits cannot be carried over to the next reporting cycle.

A minimum of 1.5 credits will be on the topic of current planning law. These credits cannot be carried over to the next two-year reporting cycle.

3.3 Non-Qualifying CM Activities

- Time spent in business meetings of APA leadership, whether at the national, chapter, or division levels, will not be eligible for CM credits.
- Time spent in mentoring activity will not be eligible for CM credits.
- Time spent in volunteer activities will not be eligible for CM credits.
- Teaching for a salary, fee, or honorarium will not be eligible for CM credits.

3.4 Standards and Requirements for Provider Registration

Educational providers including APA and its components will be required to register with APA/AICP in order to become qualified professional development providers. This means that the providers and all their eligible educational offerings will be reviewed and, upon approval, will be entered into the online directory of approved credits that all members may access. These courses will also be entered into the APA/AICP online educational calendar so that all members may become aware of these approved programs.

After their content has been reviewed and approved, there will be a registration fee for all educational providers.

To be a registered CM provider, providers must assure that their activities:

- are designed to meet a specific planning-related training objective.
- are led by one or more experts on the subject. An expert is a professional who has made a contribution to the profession through practice, teaching, research or publications; completed works that proclaim individuality and mastery of the principles of planning taught; and whose work demonstrates outstanding quality and professionalism.
- are designed to teach subject matter appropriate in depth and scope and at a level beyond a planner with at least two years of professional planning experience.
- are non promotional in nature.
- address demonstrated educational needs.
- communicate a clearly identified educational purpose or objective.
- use learning methodologies and formats that are appropriate to the activity's educational purpose or objectives.
- use evaluation mechanisms to assess an activity's quality and relevance to its purpose or objectives.

- include a mechanism of recording attendance of each AICP member.

3.5 Exemptions and Waivers

3.5.1 Retired Members

Retired members, as defined by APA, will be exempt from Certification Maintenance requirements.

3.5.2 Special Exemptions

Special exemptions may be granted for personal or hardship reasons. Documentation may be required for individuals seeking CM inactive membership status. While various circumstances may qualify, the following list is representative of those in which a temporary inactive membership status may be granted:

1. Parental leave. An inactive membership status of six months may be granted for the birth or adoption of a child.
2. Military service leave. An inactive membership status may be granted to members on active duty who are deployed overseas for either Temporary Duty (TDY) or Permanent Change of Station (PCS), or to members of the Armed Forces Reserve or National Guard who have been mobilized or deployed.
3. Health. An inactive membership status may be granted for reasons of ill health.
4. Care leave. An inactive membership status may be granted to members who need to stay at home to care for another person.
5. Foreign residency. An inactive membership status may be granted to members living outside of the U.S. for up to one year.
6. Other reasons for inactive membership status will also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.5.3 Inactive Membership

AICP members will not be required to pay AICP dues during the period in which their membership is inactive. However, during this period, AICP membership will be inactivated and the AICP credential cannot be used. Members with inactive membership status must remain members of APA and will be required to pay APA dues; they must also abide by the AICP Code of Ethics. Inactive members must reinstate AICP membership within four years and pay 20 percent of back dues owed since beginning inactive membership status. Anyone who has been an inactive member for more than four years will be required to retake the AICP exam and reenter the Institute following new member procedures.

3.5.4 Waivers

Most Certification Maintenance requirements may be waived for unemployed members during the period of unemployment. However, AICP and APA memberships must be paid and active, although they may be paid at the reduced unemployed rate. Unemployed members may continue to use the AICP credential so long as they obtain at least 25 percent of the required CM credits.

Planners practicing part time will be required to meet the full obligations of Certification Maintenance, unless granted inactive membership status.

3.5.5 Hardship for Members in Active Practice

The Commission directs staff to continue to examine possible situations in which active members face extraordinary barriers to high-quality, accessible, affordable course offerings. Staff will examine the option of development of a personal professional development plan by individuals in such situations and will examine the feasibility of offering credit for such programs provided they are reviewed and approved according to the criteria established by AICP.

3.5.6 Planners Practicing Entirely Outside of the U.S.

Planners practicing entirely outside the U.S. will be exempt from taking registered CM courses but will still be required to maintain certification through professional development, through a mechanism similar to the personal professional development plan described above. AICP members who belong to another planning organization with a rigorous, APA-approved credential program, and who must uphold Certification Maintenance for two organizations, will be able to satisfy AICP requirements through the host country's requirements so long as 32 credits are maintained over a two-year period.

3.6 Definitions

3.6.1 APA Programs. APA offers many educational programs throughout the year. These programs

focus on the professional development of practicing planners and qualify for Certification Maintenance credits. Such APA programs include, but are not limited to, APA chapter conferences and programs (including sections), APA division training programs, the APA National Planning Conference (sessions, workshops, symposia, mobile workshops), PTS Workshops, AICP Symposia, APA and AICP audio conferences, APA National Independent Study (e.g. APA audio tapes, CD-ROMs, or online courses), Tuesdays at APA, and APA's L'Enfant Lecture.

3.6.2 APA-Sponsored Programs. APA-sponsored programs are those to which APA or its components (AICP, APA chapters, or APA divisions) have significantly contributed by developing content or by providing significant financial or in-kind support.

3.6.3 CM Credit. One CM credit is equivalent to one contact hour of training.

3.6.4 PAB Graduate Degree Courses. PAB graduate degree courses have the same status as APA Programs and include those offered by PAB-accredited graduate programs but do not include PAB undergraduate degree courses or any courses offered through extension programs, professional development centers of accredited universities, or similar entities. Such entities are invited to apply through one of the other qualifying mechanisms.

3.6.5 Registered Provider. A registered provider is a provider of continuing education that has been approved for providing qualifying CM courses.

3.6.6 Retired Member. The current definition of a "retired" member is this: "You must have been an APA or AICP member continuously for 10 or more years, be 65 or older, and completely retired."

3.7 Appeals Process. The first level of appeals of any decision by APA or an APA component denying credit for any course submitted by an applicant shall be to the Executive Director and CEO of APA or a designee. Additional materials supporting the applicant's request and additional materials supporting denial may be submitted. Any second level appeal of the Executive Director's decision will be based entirely on the record submitted and will be based on a decision of a three person panel of AICP members: one member shall be appointed by the Executive Director; one member shall be appointed by the applicant; and one member shall be selected by the other two. The meeting will be held via teleconference with only the three panel members participating and their decision shall be based on application of the AICP CM criteria and the written materials submitted to the Executive Director as part of the first level appeal. The panel's decision is final.

MOTION:

That the AICP Commission adopt the details of the Certification Maintenance program for certified planners as established in Section 3, above.

4.0 Certification Maintenance Program III: Administrative Details (Staff Responsibilities)

Certain administrative details of the CM program will fall under staff responsibility and authority and will not require Commission approval for administration.

4.1 Online Logs

Credits will be reported by each qualifying AICP member in the CM online logging system. The CM logging system will be launched in January 2008. Eligible credits gained under the current CPD system on or after April 14, 2007, will be carried over into the CM logging system.

If CM credit requirements have not been satisfied by the end of the four-month grace period, the online CM logging system will no longer be accessible. At this point, an AICP member must maintain external log details in order to support future CM credit claims.

4.2 Requirements for Course or Provider Registration

Educational providers will be required to register with APA/AICP in order to become qualified professional development providers. This means that the providers and all their eligible educational offerings will be reviewed and, upon approval, will be entered into the online directory of approved credits that all

members may access. These courses will also be entered into the APA/AICP online educational calendar so that all members may become aware of these approved programs.

After their content has been reviewed and approved, there will be a registration fee for educational providers.

5.0 Other Related Information

5.1 Comments Received in Response to the February 2007 CM Draft Proposal

Pursuant to the second CM draft circulated to members in mid February, AICP received around 450 e-mails and there were 125 comments posted on the e-community "virtual town hall meeting." Some of the recurring comments that were expressed highlighted the following concerns:

- That the credit requirement of 40 credits was still too high.
- There was concern about training availability for planners in rural or remote locations.
- There was concern that chapter volunteer activity did not count towards CM (expressed by the chapter leadership).
- There were lots of questions and confusion over the 50 percent APA requirement and the endorsement of programs.

6.0 Conclusion

It is the opinion of the Commission that some form of certification maintenance standards need to be introduced to ensure the integrity of the AICP credential and advance the standards of practice of the planning profession.

Appendix

Comparisons with Other Professional Organizations:

[Click here to download matrices of other organizations' Continuing Education Programs and Eligible Activities](#)

Important Notice

On April 13, 2007, the AICP Commission approved the above plan for Certification Maintenance (CM) which includes requirements for continuing education for certified planners.

There are many details of the program which will be determined in the weeks ahead. Please send your questions about CM to AICP@planning.org, and keep checking the website for updates on the program. We will also be updating members through e-mail communication as program details are resolved.

One frequently asked question we have received concerns the logging of credits earned since April 13, 2007. The AICP Commission determined that credits earned starting on April 14, 2007, will be credited towards the new Certification Maintenance requirements.

NOTE: If you do not find these credits logged in the old CPD log system (www.planning.org/cpd/), please maintain a paper log of the courses you took. The online logging system will be inaccessible from May 1, 2007, to around the first of August 2007.

We are taking the online logging system offline in order to program the new requirements of Certification Maintenance. During this period, you can continue to earn continuing education credits. However, courses will be reviewed retroactively once the new system is in place and after the details of the new CM program are finalized. Please be sure you hold on to details of the courses you take in order to log them

into your personal log, if eligible, once the CM log is activated online.

We appreciate your patience during this period of transition.

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