

Report of the Special Committee on Education and Credentialing

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Introduction and Findings

On June 6, 2013, NAP President Maurice Henderson appointed the committee and charged it with aligning the education and credentialing programs of NAP to the Strategic Plan. Under the leadership of its chairs, Dr. Gene Bierbaum (June 2013 to May 2014) and James Stewart (May 2014 to present), and its vice chair Sandra Olson (March 2014 to present), the committee investigated the accepted best practices within the credentialing industry and reached the following findings, which inform the committee's recommendations.

1. The body that administers a credentialing program must be independent of the organization whose members are being credentialed.
2. An education program must be administered separately from its credentialing program.
3. Both the credentialing program and the educational program must be based on a defined body of knowledge that is a statement of the knowledge necessary to practice in the field.

Summary of Recommendations

The committee recommends that NAP:

1. Create an independent body within NAP to administer the credentialing program in accordance with the Body of Knowledge and generally accepted credentialing practices;
2. Align the NAP educational program with the Body of Knowledge;
3. Create a certificate program for member and leader levels in the Body of Knowledge; and
4. Remove the need for persons to pass a test to become members of NAP.

At this time, the committee proposes the attached bylaw amendments to effect recommendations 1 and 4.

History

In June, 2013, President Maurice Henderson, PRP, charged the committee with aligning the credentialing and education program of NAP to the Strategic Plan adopted by the Board of Directors, specifically to Membership Objective #6 ("Increase the number of registered and professional registered parliamentarians") and to Education Objectives #1 ("Identify core competencies to develop standardized expertise at each level of learning") and #2 ("Create a defined body of knowledge"). In addition, at the 2013 Convention, bylaw amendment #12 was

referred to the committee with the charge to “Submit a comprehensive report containing recommendations for restructuring the requirements and processes for qualifying for and retaining membership, registered membership, and professional register membership”

Initial study of existing credentialing programs and of best practices within the credentialing industry (see attached bibliography), led the committee to the findings listed above. The committee has subsequently spent the bulk of its energy creating and validating the Body of Knowledge, which lies at the center of the committee’s efforts to redesign education and credentialing within NAP.

This Body of Knowledge codifies the parliamentary knowledge and skills needed to be an effective member of an organization, to lead an organization, and to serve as a consultant to an organization. It is intended that education courses offered by NAP as well as any examinations leading to NAP credentials be aligned with this Body of Knowledge. The Body of Knowledge is attached below.

After its November 2013 meeting, the committee applied for and received a grant from the NAP Educational Foundation to finance the surveys, survey analysis, and consulting services necessary to develop the Body of Knowledge. The committee would like to express its gratitude to the Foundation for the grant; the services it allowed us to use were invaluable.

The committee created a draft Body of Knowledge and tested that draft with the members through a series of webinar meetings during February 2014. A total of 70 NAP members participated in eight webinars.

In March of 2014, at the request of Dr. Gene Bierbaum, Sandra Olson was appointed to the committee as vice chair. In May, Dr. Bierbaum resigned from the committee and James Stewart was appointed as Chair.

In June 2014, a survey on the draft Body of Knowledge was sent to all members of NAP. An analysis of the survey was prepared by Greg Tolleson of AlphaNumerix Consulting and was presented to the committee in late July.

At the NTC in Oklahoma City, a mega session was held to present an overview of the survey results and get input from members. At the post-NTC committee meeting, the Body of Knowledge was reviewed and amended based on the survey results, and the credentialing administration program and educational program were discussed.

Over the weekend of November 21 – 23, 2014, the committee met with Daniel F. Breidenbach, Ph.D., a psychometric consultant from Applied Measurement Professionals, who helped the committee design a credentialing and education program that meets credentialing industry standards. The following program proposal and bylaw amendments are the result of this process.

Recommendations

1: Creation of Commission on Credentialing.

Relative to qualifying and retaining registered and professional registered certification, the Special Committee on Credentialing and Education recommends creating a semi-autonomous Commission on Credentialing to administer the credentialing programs of NAP.

1. The commission will have six members (five of whom must be credentialed) elected by the NAP Board of Directors to serve staggered three-year terms. The board will be able to remove a member of the commission by a 2/3 vote.
2. Members of the NAP Board of Directors will not be eligible to serve on the commission, and members serving on the commission will not be permitted to teach courses leading to a credential.
3. The commission will determine the professional credentials to be offered by NAP, establish criteria for obtaining these credentials consistent with the Body of Knowledge, establish renewal requirements, and rule on appeals arising from the credentialing process.
4. The commission will administer the credentialing programs of the NAP within accepted psychometric practices and conduct periodic job analyses to keep the Body of Knowledge current. Changes to the Body of Knowledge will require approval by the NAP Board of Directors.

Rationale. NAP's credentialing program is significantly out of line with credentialing industry standards and best practices. The committee's research and consultation with industry professionals confirm that NAP's credentialing programs should be administered by a body that is substantially independent from its board and membership, that testing for its credentials should be based upon a body of knowledge validated by a survey of practitioners, and that its credentialing programs should be administered separately from its education program.

- Although hiring an independent association to administer our credentialing program is not financially feasible at this time, this bylaw amendment would establish an independent Commission on Credentialing within NAP whose membership, elected to staggered three-year terms, will provide continuity across the biennial changes in NAP leadership, thus insulating the commission from influence by the board and the convention.
- The requirement that the commission base the credentialing program on the current Body of Knowledge and conduct periodic job analyses will furthermore ensure that credentialing requirements reflect the evolving practices in our field.
- By handing oversight of our credentialing program to an independent commission, the proposal will free the Professional Development Committee to focus on creating educational programs that better serve the differing needs of our credentialed and non-credentialed members and the general public.
- The responsibility to administer the RP test would be transferred from the Member and Registration Examiners committee to the commission, consolidating responsibility for all credentialing in one body.

- Provisos to the amendments will allow the current credentialing program to remain in place until the commission completes the development of the revised program.

The committee believes this proposal will increase the credibility of NAP’s credentials by making the requirements for obtaining them more stable and more relevant to current practices in the field. This, in turn, will encourage more members to seek credentials.

2, 3: Creation of Certificate Program and Realignment of NAP Education Program

The committee recommends that a special certificate program, directed at both NAP members and the general public, be created using the Regular Member and Leader sections of the Body of Knowledge.

Rationale. Such a program would help NAP in several ways:

- it would increase NAP’s status and visibility with the general public, and thus aid in recruiting new members;
- it would create an educational pathway for NAP members seeking a professional credential; and
- fees from certificate courses would provide the organization a needed source of non-dues revenue.

4. Elimination of Membership Exam.

Relative to the process for qualifying and retaining membership, the committee recommends eliminating the requirement that individuals pass an exam on parliamentary law in order to qualify for NAP membership. The committee recommends that membership be made open to any individual who “desires to learn the fundamentals of parliamentary law and its application and who agrees to abide by the Code of Ethics for Parliamentarians”, upon submission of an application and payment of dues.

Rationale. Demanding proof of knowledge from potential members is incongruous with NAP’s purpose as an educational organization; NAP should welcome all people interested in learning about parliamentary law, and should provide courses appropriate to every level of learning. The committee’s research identified only one other association that requires a membership test to join, and in that case the individual must acquire a professional credential before joining (the equivalent to getting the RP before joining NAP). This bylaw amendment would also increase our member base by allowing those who are currently provisional members to become full members.

Return to the [Index Page for the New Credentialing System](#)

[SITEMAP: Webpages for New Credentialing System](#)