
S.O.P. #: PERSONNEL 12

SUBJECT: PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS CERTIFICATION REVIEW BOARD

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: To outline the membership of the Certification Review Board and its functions, and to identify the process for certification of personnel and instructional programs.

Section 1: Certification Review Board

A. Purpose

The Professional Qualifications Review Board is responsible for certifying fire service personnel to the current edition of applicable professional qualifications standards.

The Professional Qualifications Review Board is the designated Accredited Training Review Agency (ATRA) representing the Baltimore County Fire Department to the Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board (MFSPQB). As the ATRA, the board shall assure compliance with the state and national professional qualifications standards to include any required reports and reaccreditation documentation.

B. Definitions

ATRA-Accredited Training Review Agency: designated by the state pro qual system to certify locally and to submit and validate programs that are approved for certification.

JPR – Job Performance Requirement – term used in NFPA pro qual standards.

MFRI – Maryland Fire Rescue Institute-University of Maryland.

MFSPQB- Maryland Fire Service Professional Qualifications Board: The state professional qualifications system who issues certifications and represents the state by accreditation through the national accrediting boards.

NBFSPQ: National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications - “Pro Board” the national organization that accredits certifying systems and issues “National” certifications through state pro qual systems. They also maintain a national database available at www.theproboard.org.

IFSAC- International Fire Service Accreditation Congress - a national organization that accredits certifying systems and issues “National” certifications through state pro qual systems. They also maintain a national database that is not user accessible.

Option 1 Certification: A means of MFSPQB certification whereby a member completes an application and submits it with “source documentation” in the form of a course card, certificate or transcript.

Option 2 Certification: A means of MFSPQB certification whereby a member completes an application and submits a “program breakdown” via a correlation sheet that shows the standard and how it was met by either a course and or experience through a letter of documentation.

TEC Manual: Training Education Certification manual, an MFSPQB document that delineates what courses match specific sections of a professional qualifications standard. This is available via the departmental proqual site.

Correlation Sheets: Standards correlation sheets that show the Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) of a specific standard and how it is met by an applicant.

Form 81: A form used for certifications not gained through the Baltimore County Professional Qualifications Board that allows recordation in the county's Pro Qual Database. The form is downloadable in the forms library.

Pro Qual Database: The official BCOFD database maintained by Administrative Services. This database is updated when a member submits their state or national certification via a Form 81 through the BCOFD Professional Qualifications Board. This is the "official" departmental record of certification. If a member applies through the board the inclusion is automatic. If certification is obtained out of the scope of the Baltimore County Professional Qualifications Board or directly through the MFSPQB or another state's board then it must be validated with a Form 81 for entry onto the database.

C. Membership

1. The Board shall consist of twelve (12) members representing all areas of the department, as designated by the Fire Chief. One of these members will be the Division Chief of the Fire-Rescue Academy. The Division Chief will be responsible for the Board and may act as chairperson, or may appoint a chairperson. The chairperson must be a current member of the Board. The remaining eleven (11) members will be selected as follows: one (1) selected by the Baltimore County Professional Fire Fighters Association (Local 1311), four (4) members by the Baltimore County Volunteer Firemen's Association, and six (6) members representing a cross section of the career fire service.
2. Membership on the Board shall be for a period of three (3) years. Members may be reappointed.
3. Members must attend at least 50% of all regularly scheduled meetings during the last consecutive twelve (12) months. If a member misses more than 50% of the scheduled meetings and does not have a pre-approved excuse, he/she may be removed from the Board.
4. A quorum will be a minimum of five (5) members.

D. Function

1. The Board will meet as needed to review Option 2 applications and to conduct business as the ATRA.
2. Requests for certifications should be sent to the Professional Qualifications Review Board, c/o Fire Rescue Academy (FRA), in order to be reviewed for certification.
3. The Board shall review all appeals of its decisions. All appeals must be received within sixty (60) days of the original decision.
4. The Board shall review all instructional programs submitted and determine which certification requirements each program satisfies. These programs must also be compliant to both NBFSPQ and IFSAC standards. This may include documentation of compliance.
5. The Board shall serve as the accredited ATRA for MFSPQB for all Baltimore County Fire Service personnel. It shall perform all ATRA functions in support of professional qualifications certification as delegated by the MFSPQB.

Section 2: Certification Process

A. Training Records

1. All individual training records will be maintained by the Company Commander at each station or designated work area.
2. It shall be each individual's responsibility to provide the Company Commander with documentation of training to be included in his/her file.
3. Captains and above will be responsible to maintain their own training files.

B. Application Process

1. An individual desiring certification may download/print the respective application from the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) website @: www.mfri.org/certifications.
2. The application is filled out in its entirety.
3. Source documentation shall include course completion cards, certificates, official transcripts or the pro qual transcript from the MFSPQB, IFSAC, or NBFSPQ.
4. The completed application shall be sent to the BCOFD/Pro-Qual board at the FRA via personal delivery or interoffice mail.
5. Upon receipt of an application by the FRA it shall be logged into the system.
6. Option 1 applications will be reviewed by FRA pro qual staff and validated.
7. Option 2 applications will be reviewed monthly by a Pro Qual Board quorum at a designated meeting.
8. Once an application is validated it will be sent to the MFSPQB for entry and certificate issuance.
9. All documentation received back from Pro Qual Board will be sent via departmental mail to members work location or other volunteer station.
10. Option 2 applications once reviewed at the Baltimore County level will have a secondary review at the State level and then a certificate will be issued if the review is a positive one.

C. Issuance of Certificates

1. All pro qual certificates shall be issued by the MFSPQB and shall bear the seals of either national board or both, depending on the standard and the edition to which the individual has been certified.
2. Once issued, the certification shall be entered into the Administrative Services pro qual database at the Public Safety Building by the appropriate administrative staff. This database will serve as the official record for validation of certification within the Baltimore County Fire Department.

D. Appeals Process

1. Should the Board deny a request for certification, an explanation will be forwarded to the individual.

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2. The individual may forward a written request to the Chairperson of the Certification Review Board to appeal, in person, at an upcoming meeting. The individual appealing should come prepared to justify their reasons for the Board to reverse its decision. This request must be submitted within sixty (60) days of the Board's decision.
3. Should an application for certification be disapproved then it shall be returned to the member. Upon attaining the correct prerequisites and or validated supporting documents the individual must then resubmit for certification per section 2B.

Section 3: Types of Board Decisions

- A. After reviewing an application, the Board may recommend one of four possible decisions. They are as follows:
 1. **Approve** = Meets all applicable standards
 2. **Disapprove** = Application does not meet the standards
 3. **Pending** = The Board feels the applicant meets the intent of the standard but may be missing verification (ex: a copy of a required certificate may be missing). This allows the process to continue.
 4. **No Action** = There is insufficient information for the Board to proceed (i.e.; wrong forms used, prerequisite level not yet achieved, etc.). In cases where a No Action ruling is received, the applicant will be sent back the entire package and must correct the problem and resubmit.