POLICY
STATE FIRE ACADEMY

SUBJECT:	*Accreditation and Certification*			
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STATE FIRE MARSHAL:	*[signature]*		**DATE:**	1/6/2022

I. Purpose

The South Carolina Fire Academy (SCFA) is operated for the express purpose of educating the state's paid, volunteer, and industrial fire service personnel. The Office of the State Fire Marshal, the South Carolina Emergency Response Task Force, and the SC Fire Academy form the Division of Fire and Life Safety also known as "State Fire" within the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

The mission of South Carolina State Fire is to be the state's focal point for service and support to save lives and property. The South Carolina Fire Academy is committed to provide fire and life safety programs and services that enhance quality of life for South Carolina citizens, visitors, and firefighters. The South Carolina Fire Academy is further committed to provide the highest level of service possible in the delivery and support of training to its students and fire service personnel both public and industrial settings to:

- **Protect** – the citizens and communities of the State of South Carolina
- **Prevent** – injury and loss of life in South Carolina by utilizing incident research findings to assist in the development and delivery of programs to our citizens and emergency response personnel
- **Train** – career, volunteer and industrial emergency response personnel
- **Respond** – to all hazards involving fire, rescue and hazardous materials incidents when requested

It is the policy and practice of the SCFA to develop and deliver training courses and administer an accredited level testing system following the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) professional qualification and competency standards and accreditation criteria outlined by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board).

II.   Scope

This policy governs all accredited training programs and testing designed to meet the standards established by IFSAC and Pro Board for each certified level offered by the SCFA. Requirements of this policy are made applicable to other training programs administered by SCFA at the discretion of the Superintendent.

This policy shall not preclude the ability for the SCFA to moves towards online course delivery and online cognitive testing. This policy is applicable to paper-based testing. Any advancement in technology that would allow the SCFA to move towards computer-based testing shall not be prohibited or inhibited by this policy as long as test security, validity, and reliability can be maintained. Updates to this policy in regards to computer-based testing may be written as a separate policy prior to implementation of any new online testing procedures.

III.   Definitions

Accreditation: (1) Verification that the accredited entity meets the objectives in the bylaws and administrative policies of IFSAC and Pro Board. (2) The process by which a private, non-governmental body evaluates an educational institution or program of study and formally recognizes it as having met certain predetermined criteria or standards. The process involves an initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers. Accreditation implies stimulation toward quality improvement beyond the minimum standards specified by the accrediting body.

Accredited Entity: The South Carolina Fire Academy.

Assessment: An evaluation to determine the level of competency which a student obtains following the completion of a training course or program.

Assisting Evaluator: Person(s) supporting the Lead Evaluator in the administration of manipulative skills testing. Records a student's performance based upon objective recordings and observations using the SCFA manipulative skills evaluating checklist(s).

Authorized Designee/Personnel: Persons permitted by the Accreditation Coordinator to perform assigned duties when applicable.

Certification: Students that have met the training and education standards of the Accredited Entity of either Pro Board and/or IFSAC.

Certification Level Test Matrix: Document that outlines the necessary certification exam pre-requisite requirements for students to challenge certification examinations under the Challenge Test Process.

Cognitive Testing: Process of measuring knowledge and understanding through written examinations.

Host Department: The fire department that is hosting and coordinating the fire training course.

IFSAC: Known as the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. The Certificate Assembly accredits the certification process of a public certifying entity which includes the written and skills testing and the policies and procedures of the entity seeking accreditation.

Lead Evaluator: Person responsible to ensure manipulative skill testing is conducted in an objective and safe manner consistent with the policies and procedures of the SCFA. Supervises the conduct of Assisting Evaluators in a fair and impartial manner exhibiting the highest level of professionalism.

Mandatory Skills: Selected by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) Group during the curriculum writing process to be evaluated during the specific certification level course manipulative skills testing process.

Manipulative Skills: Practical (hands-on) skills which consist of skill steps, critical and/or non-critical, performed for an evaluation.

National Professional Qualification System Standards: Founded by Pro Board, in order to develop a system of nationalized training for firefighters. The National Fire Protective Association (NFPA) standards are the accepted measurement for job performance requirements (JPRs) for firefighter training and education.

Portfolio Assessment: An assessment methodology in which a candidate submits documentation that affirms education, training, and/or experience that validates performance to a standard or part of a standard for the purpose of certification.

Pro Board: Accredits public sector organizations that certify emergency services responders against the requirements National Professional Qualification System Standards.

Project Assessment: An assessment methodology in which candidate(s) are provided scenarios or background data that provide a framework for the candidates' perspective about the issues to which the candidate(s) are instructed to prepare and submit a response that is used to assess the candidates' performance to a standard or part of a standard for the purpose of certification.

Random Skills: Specific skills to be evaluated, minus any course mandatory skills, selected by the Accreditation Coordinator or authorized designee through a random selection process prior to the scheduling of a certification level course.

Reciprocity: A non-testing method of granting reciprocal certification from another IFSAC or Pro Board accredited entity. Upon verification of certification, student will be granted transcript credit for the applicable certification level.

Regional Training: Training delivered locally throughout the state; training not conducted on the SCFA Columbia Campus.

Resident Training: Training conducted on the SCFA Columbia Campus.

Test Proctor: Person who monitors students during an examination and ensures SCFA policies and procedures are followed to create a fair and objective testing environment.

IV.   Empowerment

The SCFA was established by legislative mandate as the sole responsibility of the State Fire Marshal in SC Code Ann. § 23-10-10. Even though the SCFA was established by the South Carolina Legislature, there is currently no mandatory requirement for accreditation of fire service training programs or certification of fire service personnel within South Carolina. Therefore, the fire service accreditation system administered by the SCFA is a voluntary system that is strongly supported by the state's fire service associations, and letters verifying support are updated accordingly in compliance with the reaccreditation process of the certifying body.

V.   General Performance Criteria

To meet the requirements of both IFSAC and Pro Board, as well as the professional expectation of the South Carolina fire service, the SCFA shall:
1. Adopt modifications and changes to any certification level training program when the NFPA adopts a modification or change within the time period mandated by the accrediting organization.
2. Not act as the national standards making body for any standard for which certification is offered.
3. Ensure the certification level testing system meets or exceeds any applicable NFPA safety and health standard or their equivalent.
4. Abide by all applicable laws, regulations, standards, and guidelines to provide a safe environment for certification testing.
5. Conduct all certification level tests in the utmost professional and objective manner in accordance with these procedures and requirements of the accrediting organizations.
6. Ensure all SCFA issued protective equipment, apparatus, and other items required for certification level testing meet or exceed the applicable NFPA standard at the time of its manufacture.
   a. It is the responsibility of the host department to ensure protective equipment, apparatus, and other items required for certification level testing not provided by the SCFA shall meet or exceed the application NFPA standard at the time of its manufacture.
7. Provide documentation of compliance with the procedures of this article within 30 days of

receipt of a written request.

8. Maintain documentation of non-compliance with any applicable statute and/or other federal state or local regulation that has occurred.

VI.   Financial Support

The SCFA is a legislatively mandated part of the Division of Fire and Life Safety of the SC Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. It is financially supported through legally established insurance premium tax allocations and generated revenue. Certification is an integral part of the SCFA, and is fully funded and supported. State Fire prepares an annual budget with provisions to support and expand the programs accredited through IFSAC and Pro Board.

VII.   Availability of Certification

It is the policy of the SCFA to make all testing and certification services available to its constituents without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or physical disability except where a persons' disability will prohibit them from attempting a bona-fide occupational qualification.

1. Certification level testing services are open to:
   a. All current members of South Carolina fire departments through all methods of delivery.
   b. Non-fire department personnel and members of out-of-state fire departments or brigades are eligible for certification only when it is offered as a part of the SCFA delivery system.
   c. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis and approved by the Accreditation Coordinator or their authorized designee.
2. Requests by applicants from other IFSAC or Pro Board states for non-SCFA course delivery under the Challenge Test Procedure will be considered only if that state's certifying entity is not accredited to the level requested.
3. The SCFA accredited certification system is open to participation through one of the following methods:
   a. Complete the required SCFA course(s) and any additional prerequisites, and then take the separate written test for that certification level.
   b. Successfully complete a SCFA course in which a certification level test is included within the normal course delivery.
   c. Apply for reciprocity for a certification level received through an agency accredited by IFSAC or Pro Board for a certification level offered by the SCFA.
   d. Students who have completed a SCFA course of instruction prior to the academy receiving accreditation to that level will be allowed to challenge the accredited certification test for that level.
4. Certification level testing services are made available to all fire service personnel by scheduling certification level tests based on the needs of the local constituency and available resources of the SCFA.
5. Certification level test prerequisites and requirements to test as well as registration information are listed in the SCFA course offerings found on the State Fire website. If no specific dates are listed, applicants may contact the Regional Coordinator to schedule a

certification level test and verification of qualifications.

6. When published, a schedule of all accredited level test dates and locations is available to the Administrative Office of IFSAC and Pro Board. Representatives of these organizations are welcome to observe any testing process with a 48-hour notice to the South Carolina Fire Academy prior to the testing date.

7. No certification level test will be administered without a thorough pre-registration check ensuring prerequisite requirements are met.

8. Pre-registration is a function of the main campus and regional offices of the SCFA. In the case of in-state request exams, the appropriate regional office assumes these functions.

9. Registration confirmation notices identifying reasons for non-acceptance are mailed or electronically sent to the student prior to the test date.

10. The SCFA shall ensure that adequate facility space is available to support certification testing.

11. It is the policy of the SCFA that the accreditation process shall not affect the current certification level status of any individual.

12. All accredited certifications issued by the SCFA are effective for the life of the individual for the level and edition year of the applicable NFPA standard.

13. No continuing education process is currently required to maintain the validity of a certification issued by the SCFA.

14. The SCFA does not delegate its certifying authority to any political subdivision, local government entity or other South Carolina state government agency.

VIII. General Certification Testing Policy

All certification level test instruments (written tests, skills requirements, test banks, diagrams, etc.) will be secured in the test security room at the SCFA, in an approved secure storage location in the Regional Office, in an approved secured test box for transport of testing instruments, and/or on the Learning Management System (LMS) controlled through the LMS Administrator and the Accreditation Coordinator. Only the Accreditation Coordinator or their authorized personnel shall access certification level test instruments. The Accreditation Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the security and administration of all certification level tests instruments and will make periodic inspections of locations where test instruments are maintained. The SCFA offers tests for all courses for which accreditation has been obtained and include the following guidelines:

1. Pre-requisite requirements for certification level testing are published in the current curriculum catalog on the State Fire website and the SCFA Certification Level Test Matrix.

2. Cognitive skills are tested through objectively graded written tests based on job performance requirements (JPRs) requiring a 70% minimum score for successful completion. Raw scores are rounded to the nearest whole number to establish a final score.

3. Manipulative skills are examined through a process of practical and oral testing usually administered in conjunction with a training course.
    a. Credit for manipulative skills is not given for skills successfully performed during training, class work, or other means outside the testing mode. Testing can be accomplished during the same time period as training as long as there is a distinct line between the training mode and the testing mode of that time period.

4. Manipulative skill tests will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

5. Manipulative skills will be based on JPRs of the applicable NFPA standard, and if the skill is successfully demonstrated, it is assumed the student possesses the requisite knowledge and skills required by the standard to complete the task.
6. Manipulative skills may be simulated if one of the following two conditions are met.
   a. The option to simulate the skill is noted on the Performance Task Manual.
   b. The hosting facility does not have the equipment needed to perform the skill. In such cases, the Region Coordinator must approve the proposed method of simulation to ensure the JPRs of the skill can be met.
7. If a portfolio or project is the only instrument utilized to evaluate requisite knowledge and skills, all components of the objectives or Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) of the applicable NFPA standard for that course will be examined.
8. All certification level written examinations shall be administered by an authorized Test Proctor and all certification level manipulative examinations shall be administered by an authorized Lead Evaluator.
9. All certification level examinations shall be administered to ensure impartial and objective scoring.
10. Final scores on examinations will be placed on student's official transcript no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the examination.

IX.   Selection, Qualifications, and General Guidelines for Evaluators and Test Proctors

1. The selection of the **Lead Evaluator** for certification level courses must meet the following guidelines:
   a. Must be a SCFA resident faculty member or selected from outside the host fire department by the Regional Coordinator or Course Coordinator.
   b. Has a signed Lead Evaluator Agreement on file with the SCFA agreeing to comply with all SCFA policies and procedures concerning skills evaluations for certification level courses.
   c. Be a SCFA instructor certified and eligible to participate in training according to the current SCFA instructor certification procedures, or a faculty member of the South Carolina Fire Academy.
   d. All evaluators must be currently certified and possess specialty classification in the skills/course being evaluated.
   e. Possess superior skills and mastered the subject matter of the course being evaluated.
   f. Have supervisory skills necessary for proper oversight of assisting evaluators and students.
   g. Possess the ability to objectively evaluate students and assisting instructor performance.
   h. Committed to serve as Lead Evaluator and willing to accept evaluation assignments when asked to do so.
   i. Have a positive commitment to the SCFA and to upholding SCFA practices and principles.
   j. Except in the case of resident or direct delivery courses using SCFA faculty, the Lead Evaluator can neither be a member of the host department nor have taught in any portion of the course being evaluated.

       i. Any exceptions to this requirement require written documentation by the Accreditation Coordinator to be included in the course/test documentation.

2. If necessary, **Assisting Evaluators** will be selected by the lead evaluator from a list of approved evaluators or:
    a. Be approved by the Course Coordinator or Regional Coordinator.
    b. May come from the host fire department provided they are authorized SCFA course instructors and they have not taught any portion of the subject being evaluated.
    c. May be Academy Certified Instructors (ACIs) from an outside department who are authorized SCFA course instructors and have completed the offsite instructing form.
    d. The process of selecting evaluators is the same for all courses.

3. In the event of extraordinary circumstances or prolonged situations beyond the control of the SCFA where the above requirements for lead and assisting evaluators are impractical or impossible to comply with, the SCFA recognizes the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) may wish to continue the professional development of its staff. Therefore, the SCFA permits the AHJ to utilize lead and assisting evaluators from within the AHJ's jurisdiction to evaluate the performance of its staff if the following conditions are met:
    a. There is in fact a situation or condition beyond the control of the SCFA that prohibits adherence to this policy.
    b. The selected lead evaluator and assisting evaluators are pre-approved by the SCFA through the Regional Coordinator.
    c. The examination process is pre-approved by the SCFA through the Regional Coordinator prior to the evaluation being conducted.
    d. The Regional Coordinator will review and audit the process used by the AHJ to ensure credibility and validity and submit notification to the Accreditation and Certification Coordinator within 24 hours if any problem or issue of concern is noted.
    e. Each evaluator is subject to corrective action in compliance with State Fire's policies and procedures for failing to abide by all requirements, guidelines, policies, and procedures governing certification level program administration.

4. The selection of a **Test Proctor** for certification level written tests must meet the following guidelines:
    a. The Test Proctor may be a member of the host fire department as long as they have not taught any portion in the course being tested and the following conditions have been met:
        i. The proctor has a signed Test Proctor Agreement on file with the SCFA agreeing to comply with all SCFA policies and procedures concerning certification test administration.
        ii. The Regional or Resident Coordinator assigned to the course has approved the selected Test Proctor.

5. General provisions covering Test Proctors include:
    a. SCFA employees, either full-time or part time, and regional coordinators are deemed Test Proctors.
    b. The testing process may be audited at any time by a member of the Accreditation and Certification section to ensure compliance with all applicable policies and procedures.

    c. Regional Coordinators will maintain a list of designated Test Proctors for their region and update it as needed.

    d. Test Proctors are not required to hold specialty classification in the subject being tested.

    e. All Test Proctors are required to attend biennial training as instructors where custody and administration of certification test and updates to policy and procedures are included.

6. If SCFA policy and procedure changes occur between biennial instructor recertification training courses, the SCFA will schedule and conduct specific training classes mandating all evaluators and proctors attend.

7. Any Test Proctor and/or evaluator will be subject to corrective action in compliance with State Fire's policies and procedures for failing to abide by all requirements, guidelines, policies, and procedures governing certification level program administration.

X.   Written (Cognitive) Test Administration

1. The SCFA will conduct all testing services related to training programs in a consistent and reliable manner following the provisions of this policy with the understanding some non-certification tests may be conducted without the requirements stipulated by IFSAC or Pro Board.

2. The SCFA will verify student registration and pre-requisite requirements have been met for all students taking written tests administered under this policy, and students must be in good standing and properly enrolled in the appropriate course prior to the test date.

3. When appropriate, the SCFA will send a confirmation notice to students registered for a written test approximately two weeks prior to the test date. The notice may be sent via email or standard mail.

4. The SCFA via the database, Program Coordinator, or Accreditation Coordinator or their designee provides the test proctor with a class roster indicating the names of each student scheduled to take the written test.

5. The student's name must appear on the roster in order to be admitted to the testing location.

    a. Student's identification shall be verified with an appropriate photo documentation prior to issuance of test materials. This step is not necessary when dealing with end of course exams.

    b. Walk-in students that have not pre-registered will not be allowed to test except in certain circumstances where the SCFA or Regional Coordinators have established set testing dates for challenge tests or re-testing and the student's registration and prerequisite requirements have been confirmed.

6. Students are prohibited from having cell phones, pagers, tablets, smart watches, radios, or any type of electronic device in their possession during testing. All such items must be removed from the testing location prior to test distribution.

7. The Test Proctor will announce to all students that any and all electronic devices will be removed from the testing room and secured appropriately.

    a. Any student who refuses to comply with removing all electronic devices will be dismissed from the testing session and given a zero (0) grade on the test.

      b. Any student dismissed for refusing to comply with the electronic exclusion requirement may file an appeal to the Accreditation Coordinator as specified in the Appeals Process outlined in this policy.

8. The Test Proctor will document any incident surrounding a student's dismissal for refusing to comply with test administration policies and report it to the Regional or Program Coordinator no later than the next business day including submission of a written statement.

9. Once testing has begun, no additional students will be admitted to the test location.

10. The Test Proctor may approve restroom breaks, if necessary, with all other requests to leave the testing room during the test period handled on a case-by-case basis. The Test Proctor must approve any requests to leave, document the incident, and forward the documentation to the Program Coordinator or Regional Coordinator upon test period completion.

11. Test Proctor to student ratio for testing will not exceed 1:30, and if more than one room is used for testing, each room is required to have a Test Proctor present and test participants will be seated a minimum of one foot apart.

12. The Test Proctor will maintain a quiet testing environment and any student disrupting the testing environment or process will be dismissed and given a zero (0) grade. Any dismissal for a disruption of the test environment must be documented by the Test Proctor and submitted to the Regional or Program Coordinator and to the Accreditation Coordinator no later than the next business day.

13. In the rare circumstance of an unforeseen interruption, such as an evacuation due to a fire alarm, the Test Proctor shall secure all examination materials until entry into the testing area is restored.

      a. The Test Proctor shall note the time the interruption occurred as to not deduct from the student's total allotted testing time.

      b. Best judgement for the health and safety of the students shall be used by the Test Proctor.

      c. Notification of the interruption shall be made to the Regional or Program Coordinator and to the Accreditation Coordinator as soon as possible, but no later than the next business day.

      d. In the event an interruption is determined to adversely impact the ability to provide a fair and consistent testing environment, the Test Proctor may, in direct coordination with the Regional or Accreditation Coordinator, nullify results for all student's testing. The examination will be rescheduled for another time to ensure students are able to complete the examination in the same fair and consistent format as all other students.

14. Any student found to be copying from another student, or cheating in any way, will be automatically dismissed from the test and given a (0) score.

      a. The Test Proctor shall document any case of cheating and inform the Regional or Program Coordinator and the Accreditation Coordinator no later than the next business day.

15. No food, drinks, tobacco products or vape devices are allowed in the testing room during the testing period.

16. The Test Proctor will ensure safety instructions concerning medical or any other form of emergency are clearly covered following the guidelines listed on the "Directions for Administering Professional Certification Tests" card.

17. Students are allowed to leave the testing room after they have turned in their test booklet, answer sheet, pencils and any other testing materials to the Test Proctor and excused from the testing room by the Test Proctor.
    a. Test Proctors will ensure all answer sheets are complete and properly filled in prior to approving a student to leave the testing room upon submission of their test.
    b. Students will not be allowed back in the testing room once they have submitted their test to the Test Proctor, have been approved by the Test Proctor to leave, and exited the room.
18. Test Proctors will check test booklets to make sure no marks were made in the test booklets and the test booklets are suitable for reuse. The test booklets will be collected and placed in numerical order for return to the appropriate SCFA office within five (5) working days after the examination date; two (2) days best practice.
19. The SCFA's preferred method of grading courses is through a computerized scanning method. Through this method, scores are verified immediately through the computer grading system using secured links to the grading software. If needed, pass/fail criteria is available to the student and fire department can be obtained by the student or fire department through the Fire Portal.
    a. The SCFA may, in limited situations, hand grade certification examinations using a prepared answer key. In these cases, scores will be verified through the computer grading system immediately upon receipt of the course package or the computer grading system is repaired.

XI. <u>Proctors Instructions to Test Participants</u>

1. Test Proctors will ensure each student present to take a certification test will be given one answer sheet to record their individual responses to test questions.
2. There shall be only one correct response for each test question.
3. Test Proctors will explain each part of all forms used in the testing process including the answer sheet and explain the proper technique for marking responses.
    a. Test Proctors will make available to the test participants answer sheet instructions clearly detailing the requirements to complete the answer sheet.
    b. Test Proctors will advise all test participants on how to properly change their answer consistent with the requirements of the scoring method and technology being used by the SCFA. This can include completely erasing practices when using a pencil, answer sheet replacement when required, or other form to indicate a changed answer.
4. Test Proctors will advise the students of the number of questions on the test.
5. Test Proctors will advise the test participants of the time limit to complete the test. Generally, SCFA allows 30 minutes for each 25 test questions unless otherwise specified. Thus a test having 100 questions would require a participant be given 2 hours to complete the test.
6. Test Proctors will make sure each test participant is fully aware and equipped with all necessary materials and equipment to complete the testing process.
7. Test Proctors will cover how interruptions are dealt to include, but not limited to:
    a. Test participants must raise their hand and wait to be recognized by the proctor.
    b. No more than one person shall leave the test room at one time during the testing period.

       c. Unprofessional behavior such as foul language, making threats, or other types of irregular behavior will not be tolerated and could lead to immediate dismissal and other appropriate actions.

       d. All excess noise must be kept to a minimum during the testing period.

       e. Test proctor cannot answer questions once the test booklet has been distributed.

       f. Test Proctor cannot provide clarification on any test question, Test Proctors are only allowed to merely read the question as stated offering no interpretations or indications of an appropriate answer.

8. If pencils are used to record answers on the answer sheet, additional pencils are available via the Test Proctor.

       a. Only #2 pencils may be used on the exam answer sheet.

9. The Test Proctor will advise test participants of the computerized scanning method SCFA uses to score answer sheets, and if needed, pass/fail criteria is available to the student or the department immediately, through the SC Fire Portal, or after the course package has been processed by SCFA staff.

10. Any question on a written test left unanswered will be counted as incorrect.

11. Any question with two marked responses will be counted as incorrect unless review of the answer sheet indicates a definite change in answer where the previous answer was not erased properly.

12. Final scores are determined by deducting the number of incorrect responses times the question point value from 100%.

13. Test participants must make a 70% or better to successfully pass a written test and be eligible to receive an IFSAC certificate. Pro Board applications will be mailed with IFSAC certificates.

14. Test participants/students not making the 70% minimum score will be allowed to retest according to the retest provisions outlined in this policy.

15. Test participants will have access to an individual mastery report indicating their strengths and weaknesses in the subject area.

16. Test Proctors will advise participants/students of the SCFA process to appeal as stipulated under the Appeals Process Section of this policy.

17. Test Proctors will announce "are there any questions", and if none, Test Proctors will announce no talking after the test has been distributed.

18. Test will be handed out or distributed face down and so that no one can immediately read the questions.

19. The Test Proctor will tell test participants/students to turn over the test and record the test version number in the appropriate space on the answer sheet.

20. Test will begin when the Test Proctor announces the current time, test period ending time and states "begin" the test.

21. The Test Proctor shall state the time remaining after the first hour of testing has elapsed and may give additional "time left" warnings at his/her discretion prior to the testing period ending.

22. The test will end when the Test Proctor announces "Test time has expired, stop, and place your pencils down." No student will be allowed to answer questions at this point.

23. The entire course package, including test materials, will be submitted to the SCFA administration no more than 5 business days after the test date.

24. The Test Proctor may conclude the examination process early provided that all students have completed the exam and voluntarily turned in their test booklets and answer sheets.

XII. <u>**Oral Testing Procedures for Cognitive Tests**</u>

Request for oral testing must be accompanied by medical documentation from a licensed medical practitioner or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) showing the accommodations required for oral test administration.

1. Requests for oral testing are administered in accordance with the following procedures:
   a. Requests for an orally administered exam will be considered only for valid medical reasons. The student must contact the Regional Coordinator or Course Coordinator and provide current medical documentation on physician/medical professional letterhead at the point of registration.
      i. Notifications not made at the point of registration will be accommodated based on availability of additional Test Proctors to facilitate the oral test.
   b. Career & Technology Center (CTC) students will be required to submit a copy of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) showing accommodation for oral testing (or the applicable accommodation required).
2. Any student who has previously taken an oral test through the SCFA will be granted approval for oral testing within the guidelines of this policy without further documentation.
3. Oral testing should be done at the same time written tests are conducted whenever possible.
4. If required, the Regional or Course Coordinator will select a date, time and location suitable for oral test administration.
5. The student requesting oral testing will be given the same test version as the other members of the course for which the test is being administered.
6. All written test administration guidelines will be followed during oral tests with the following modifications:
   a. The Test Proctor will read each test question out loud; pause; and then read each possible response out loud, pausing between the responses.
   b. The Test Proctor will wait 5-10 seconds and then repeat the process in (a) above unless the student indicates it's not required.
   c. The Test Proctor will read the question and responses in a manner that does not indicate an answer, emphasize an answer or suggest an answer.
   d. No additional comments will be made between the Test Proctor and student during testing.
   e. The Test Proctor will ensure the student is ready for the next question prior to moving to the next question.
   f. After all test questions and responses have been read, the student will be allowed time to review and ask the Test Proctor to re-read a question and responses if required.

XIII. <u>**Manipulative Skills Testing Procedures**</u>

1. All manipulative skill testing is based on a pass or fail standard.
   a. A score of "Pass" shall indicate that a step or skill was performed correctly.
   b. A score of "Fail" shall indicate that a step or skill was performed in an unsafe manner or to the point of being ineffective.

2. Evaluators shall judge a student's performance relative to the skill criteria of the objective being measured.
3. The Lead Evaluator will have the final decision authority in cases of disputed evaluation techniques or performance questions.
4. Manipulative skills that require two-person or group activities are evaluated for individual credit.
5. All students must perform at each position required in the skill in order to receive credit.
6. Should a student fail to earn a passing grade on a manipulative skill on the first attempt, he/she is eligible for an immediate second attempt of the skill. An immediate third attempt will be offered by the Lead Evaluator if fifty percent (50%) or greater of the manipulative skill steps were completed satisfactory on the first and again on the second attempt. It is not necessary that the completed skill steps be the same.
   a. Any failed attempt caused by a failure of a Critical Skill Step will automatically eliminate the third attempt consideration.
7. Lead and Assisting Evaluators are prohibited from providing students with any coaching or additional training during the evaluation process. However, evaluators may point out to the student which steps they failed after each attempt.
8. Skills assigned for manipulative skill testing are selected through a process of specific skill testing, random skill testing, scenario skill testing or a combination of the three.
9. In manipulative skills tests where mandatory skills are tested, they will be identified on course skill sheets. These mandatory skills are selected by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) group.
10. In manipulative skills tests where random skills are tested, specific skills to be evaluated shall be randomly selected by the Accreditation Coordinator or authorized designee from a list of available skills for the applicable national standard as needed.
    a. All randomly generated manipulative skills tests shall produce a unique set of skills in each testing session.
    b. All randomly generated manipulative skills tests shall contain a variety of skills that are evaluated equally and with the same degree of difficulty for each student.
11. Process for random selection of manipulative skills:
    a. Non-mandatory skills will be assigned a number that correlates to that particular skill.
    b. Non-mandatory skills will be selected in a random process such as a blind drawing, numbered cards, electronic random generator or by use of the random generator in the SCFA testing software.
       i. Prior to the date of the class, the Accreditation Coordinator or an authorized designee will conduct the random selection using one of these processes.
    c. Skills drawn will represent the various categories identified as non-mandatory, if duplicate skills for a category are selected, the duplicate skill will be set aside and another will be randomly drawn.
12. In the case of emergency, such as severe weather conditions, the Lead Evaluator will contact the Regional Coordinator for an alternate skill.
13. Regional Coordinators or Training Manager will not disclose skills to be tested on at any time prior to the test date.
    a. The non-mandatory skills for the course will be provided to the Regional Coordinator prior to the date of the course in order for arrangements to be made for the appropriate props required for skills being evaluated.

14. The Lead Evaluator will ensure that students not actively involved in testing are in an area where observation of the testing process is not possible.
15. Evaluated students and unevaluated students are not allowed to communicate with each other.
16. The Lead Evaluator shall have the final decision in any questions or disputes that arise during the evaluation process.
17. It is the Lead Instructor's responsibility to make certain that all paperwork for the class is in order before the evaluation begins, and that all necessary equipment and props are in place and working.
18. All evaluations shall use the appropriate SCFA skill sheet for evaluation criteria when conducting evaluations and evaluate performance based only on the listed criteria.
19. The Lead Evaluator shall sign all evaluation forms, ensuring that the evaluation forms are completed properly in ink and returned to the Lead Instructor immediately following the testing session.
20. The Lead Evaluator is responsible for maintaining a safe environment while testing is in progress and shall conduct pretest briefing with the checklist.
21. The Lead Instructor is responsible for returning the completed course paperwork to the Regional or Course Coordinator within five (5) working days; two (2) days best practice.
22. Evaluators shall notify their appropriate Regional or Course Coordinator of any problems or difficulties encountered during the performance of a manipulative skills evaluation.

XIV. Emergency Provisions

1. The South Carolina Fire Academy acknowledges the need for modifications to the cognitive and manipulative testing policy during pandemic conditions, States of Emergency as declared by the SC Governor, and/or emergency circumstances as determined by the Superintendent. The Superintendent may approve a specified time period in a specific sunset clause to allow for modifications to include, but not limited to:
2. Conducting remote manipulative testing under the direct supervision of SCFA approved instructors using the most appropriate video conferencing and/or video technology such as drone live feeds.
3. Allowing final cognitive and manipulative testing to be performed by approved in-house instructors not involved with instruction of a course.

4. All exceptions applied to a course shall be documented and attached to the course packet for record keeping to including:
   a. The instructor information.
   b. Detailed explanation of the exemption(s) applied.
   c. The specific time period of any exemption(s) allowed.

XV. Group (Project) Based Assessments

Students in courses requiring group-based assessments to meet a specific standard will work within a group to collectively complete a final presentation. Each student will prepare and present a portion of the project. Students will be evaluated as a group, but in order to assess individual performance, each student will submit their portion of the project individually. A final Project Evaluation Form

will be prepared for each group project. Group-based assessments will be completed following an established rubric.

XVI.   <u>Retesting Policy for Written Tests</u>

1. Individuals failing to obtain the required minimum score on any written test will be allowed two (2) retest opportunities for each type of written test.
2. An immediate retest opportunity will be given at the next available testing date, no sooner than one day after the initial test failure, and no later than 120 days after the initial test failure.
3. The Accreditation Coordinator can authorize an exception to the 24 hours delay period between the original test and the first retest opportunity if deemed appropriate under extenuating circumstances.
4. Students failing to obtain the required minimum score on the first retest opportunity will be allowed a second retest opportunity a minimum of 30 days after the immediate (1st) retest date.
   a. For regional recruit schools only, the option of an immediate retest opportunity for the second and third attempts may be given at the next available testing date, no sooner than one day after the initial test failure, and no later than 120 days after the initial test failure. The second and third attempts shall be given the same day unless other arrangements have been made with the Regional or Accreditation Coordinator.
5. Students failing to obtain the required minimum score on the third attempt can file an appeal to the Accreditation Coordinator for a final fourth attempt and must be able to substantiate one or more of the following:
   a. The testing environment was not adequate.
   b. An external problem contributed to the failure.
   c. An external problem contributed to not testing within 120 days.
6. The SCFA has the authority to prohibit a fourth or subsequent attempt to re-take any exam.
7. Each written retest administered under this policy shall be different than the original test or previous test; whichever applies. Written retests will not be the same test version previously failed. No retests will be given after 120 days from the original test date without authorization from the Accreditation Coordinator or their designee.
8. Failure of the written testing process will require the course of instruction to be repeated.
9. Any retest must be completed at a time and location convenient with the Regional or Accreditation Coordinator's schedule as to not negatively affect other course deliveries or customer needs

XVII. <u>Retesting Policy for Manipulative (Practical) Skills Tests</u>

1. Should an individual fail to earn a passing grade on a manipulative skill on the first attempt, he/she is eligible for an immediate second attempt on that skill.
2. Under this policy, a third attempt can be approved by the Lead Evaluator if 50% or greater of the skill steps were completed in a satisfactory manner on the first and second attempts.
3. Any failed attempt caused by a failure of a **Critical Skill Step** will automatically eliminate the third attempt consideration.
4. No coaching from the evaluator will be permitted, and the student can only be told what steps they failed.

5. A student who fails their first testing opportunity (up to three attempts) is eligible for an immediate retesting opportunity (consisting of up to three attempts) in accordance with the procedure outlined above and at the next available testing date.
6. In the case on an emergency, such as severe weather conditions the Lead Evaluator will contact the Regional Coordinator for an alternative randomly drawn skill.
7. A student who fails their immediate retesting opportunity (up to three attempts) is eligible for a second retesting opportunity (consisting of up to three attempts) in accordance with the procedure outlined above a minimum of 30 days after the immediate retest opportunity.
8. On any manipulative skills retest, the student will only be required to retest the skill initially failed.
9. Students failing to obtain the required minimum score on the second retest opportunity can file an appeal to the Accreditation Coordinator for a third and final retest opportunity and must be able to substantiate one or more of the following:
   a. The testing environment was not adequate.
   b. An external problem contributed to the failure.
10. The decision of the Accreditation Coordinator is final on the appeal.
11. No manipulative skills retest opportunity will be given after 120 days from the original test date without authorization from the Accreditation Coordinator or their designee.

XVIII. Course Records Management

The South Carolina Fire Academy maintains course summary and individual student records for all accredited level tests. This information is stored in hard copy format, computer database format or both. The information is maintained for a minimum of ten (10) years**.**

1. Each accredited level test will:
   a. Be assigned a course code and section number as per standard course development procedure.
   b. Be assigned a separate course code and section number or grouped under the same section number where applicable if administered independent of an established training course.
   c. Documented as part of the course record if administered in conjunction with an established SCFA delivery method.
2. The following information is maintained for all certification level tests:
   a. Individual registration forms for course participants which include:
      i. The student identification number.
      ii. Personal address.
      iii. Department represented.
      iv. Signed "Release of Information" statement.
   b. Attendance report completed by the Test Proctor and summarizes student scores.
   c. Original student test answer sheets which have been processed, scored, and reviewed for scoring accuracy.
   d. Final course summary after administrative review and records updated.
3. The release of student certification information shall be done in accordance with current SCFA information disclosure guidelines and:
   a. The SCFA has a signed information release from the student authorizing the release of his/her information to authorized persons or entities. Authorized persons or

entities include:
  i. The student,
  ii. The student's Fire Chief,
  iii. The student's Training Officer.
- b. The information is released pursuant to a written request from an authorized person or entity.
- c. Information is sent via email or standard mail to the authorized person or entity.
- d. Information may not be faxed or verbally communicated conflicting with the requirements of this policy.

XIX. IFSAC Reporting

The SCFA is required to report certain information to IFSAC on an annual basis, but may elect to submit the required data at a more frequent interval such as monthly. When IFSAC courses are completed, the course package will be submitted to the Accreditation and Certification section for review and entry into the SCFA database. The Testing Coordinator or other designated individual will ensure all required reporting data is entered into the database properly.

1. IFSAC reports for submission will include:
   a. Entity number.
   b. Seal Number.
   c. Registrant's Name; birthday; personal identification number; discipline; registrant level; edition; mail date and date of certification.
2. Only information from successful candidates will be submitted.
3. The reporting data will be transferred in encrypted electronic format that meets IFSAC guidelines.

XX. Test Bank Management

1. SCFA shall maintain a computerized master test bank for each of the accredited levels offered.

2. SCFA utilizes test creation and management software by Assessment Solutions Corporation, LLC (ASC) and fire service test banks authored by Performance Training Systems, Inc. (PTS), Fire Protection Publications (FPP) and Jones & Bartlett (J&B). This test bank software allows for flexible, random test design, automatic exam scoring and statistical analysis.
   a. In the event the current test creation and management software becomes obsolete, replacement testing software will be vetted to allow for flexible, random test design, automatic exam scoring and statistical analysis.
   b. Test questions are validated using the procedure outlined below. Additional procedural information may be obtained from ASC.
      i. A Review Committee composed of subject matter experts, such as practicing veteran fire fighters, trainers, and officers with qualifying work experience, write and validate test items.
   c. Each item is:
      i. Reviewed for job relevance and accuracy.

      ii. Referenced to the appropriate NFPA standard and cross-referenced to IFSTA, J&B or SCFA training manuals when possible.

3. Purchased test items are reviewed by SCFA to ensure content and job validity for state use.
4. Reliability will be measured as each test is scored. Statistics may be gathered as needed to review certification test reliability. Items to be reviewed shall include:
    a. Number of students taking the exam
    b. Distribution of test scores
    c. Average test score for each exam
5. Additional test items or test banks developed by SCFA for any reason shall adhere to the same test item writing and validation procedure outlined above.
6. All test banks are reviewed for reliability and validity on a six-month basis, or as often as necessary to maintain the highest quality certification examination system possible.

XXI. <u>Test Box Preparation, Transfer, Security and Control</u>

1. The SCFA transports certification level test instruments in containers or envelopes where seals are utilized to verify uncompromised security. The container used to transport test instruments is known as a "test box" and can vary in size depending on the number of test participants. The test box will contain the following:
    a. Appropriate number of written tests for the course for the number of registered participants.
    b. An appropriate number of answer sheets/cards used by participants to answer written questions and a written instruction sheet on how to fill out the answer sheet.
    c. Appropriate number of student evaluations of instructors/facilities (where not electronically submitted).
    d. Inventory sheet listing overall contents of the test box.
    e. Test Proctor Checklist with general guidelines for conducting written tests.
    f. Directions for Administering Professional Certification Tests with instructions that must be read out loud to the participants.
    g. Lead Evaluator Checklist with guidelines for test administration.
    h. Practical skill sheets with step-by-step guides for evaluation of practical skills.
    i. Test Problem Report instruction sheet providing instructions on how to address problems such as missing written test pages, previous answers indicated on written test, illegible written tests, missing skills evaluation guides, etc.
    j. Where required, appropriate forms, diagrams or sheets of blank paper, etc. to be used for skills requiring participants to perform documentation tasks such as, but not limited to, incident pre-plans, response plans, etc.
    k. Appropriate number of pencils when and if required or requested pursuant to the SCFA's Directions for Administering Professional Certification Tests.
    l. Uniquely numbered seals for verifying security of the testing instruments prior to leaving the secure storage room and for return to the secure storage room after test administration.
    m. Chain of Possession Form attached or included with the test box.
2. All test boxes, regardless of design, will be transported with a security seal attached or affixed in a manner indicating uncompromised security.
3. When picking up a test box from SCFA staff at the secure storage room, the person picking up the test box shall:

> a. Verify the appropriate test box is being picked up and is appropriate for the course code and section number being tested.
> b. Verify the security seal is properly affixed and no evidence of tampering is present.
> c. Fill out and sign the Chain of Possession Form and ensure it is attached to the test box.
> d. Maintain custody and control of the test box until delivered to the appropriate person.
> e. Tests boxes will not be left unattended and unsecure at any time.

4. When receiving a test box, the person receiving the test box will:
   a. Verify the security seal is properly affixed and no evidence of tampering is present.
   b. Check to ensure the Chain of Possession Form is properly filled out and signed by the person giving them the test box.
   c. Complete the section of the Chain of Possession Form applicable to them.
   d. If transporting to another person, ensure the Chain of Possession Form is properly filled out for transfer and the security seal remains in place until accepted by the appropriate person.

5. The SCFA and regional offices will maintain a log book/record for all of test boxes containing certification test instruments leaving/returning to their respective secure storage rooms with the following information indicated:
   a. Course code and section number.
   b. Designated Test Proctor's name.
   c. Location of testing.
   d. Individual written test numbers issued/returned.
   e. Total number of written test issued and the version (if applicable).
   f. Individual or skills package number or skill(s) to be evaluated.
   g. Security seal at time of test box issue.
   h. Expected security seal upon test box return.
   i. Date test box issued from administration.
   j. Name of issuing authorized SCFA staff member.

XXII. Problems with Test Booklets or Manipulative Skills Sheets

The SCFA recognizes there may be problems with testing instruments and these may include, but are not limited to:
1. Page(s) missing.
2. Writing on the test booklets.
3. Test question (stem) format.
4. Problem with key such as two correct keys.
5. Worn or unserviceable pages.
6. Skill sheets not consistent with training outline or examples in text.

If there is a problem with one or more of the test instruments, the Test Proctor or Lead Evaluator will complete a Test Problem Report, attach it to the problem instrument, place it on top of the other test instruments and return it to the Regional Coordinator or Accreditation Coordinator. The Regional Coordinator or Accreditation Coordinator will examine the test instrument, and if it has a minor problem not affecting test validity, it may remain in service. If the test instrument cannot be used, the Regional Coordinator or Accreditation Coordinator will place the test instrument in a

secure location ensuring it will not be used or accessed by any unauthorized personnel unless immediate replacement is required.

When replacement is required, the Regional Coordinator must send all unserviceable test instruments to the Accreditation Coordinator for destruction and replacement. The Accreditation Coordinator is responsible for ensuring damaged or unserviceable test instruments are shredded or destroyed and a replacement is produced and distributed accordingly.

XXIII. **Appeals Process**

It is the policy of the SCFA to provide students with an orderly and systematic means to appeal decisions or actions regarding testing and accreditation procedures without fear of reprisal.

1. Conditions under which a student may exercise his/her right to appeal include:
   a. Non-compliance of the written and/or manipulative skill testing procedures outlined in the SCFA's Accreditation and Certification policy.
   b. Disputed validity of cognitive test questions, test answers, manipulative skills requirements, or pass/fail criteria.
   c. The testing environment was not adequate or an external problem contributed to the failure as stipulated under sections Retesting Policy for Written Tests and/or Retesting Policy for Manipulative Skills Test of the this policy.
   d. Discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender, age, national origin or physical disability not excluded as a bona-fide condition of employment.
2. The appellant must submit a written appeal either on paper or email to the Accreditation Coordinator meeting the following criteria:
   a. Appeal is submitted within 30 calendar days from the date of the alleged discriminatory action.
   b. Appeal must be specific and include date, time, location, person(s) involved, and specific detail of the discriminatory action under one or more of the conditions listed in item #1 above.
3. Upon receipt of the appeal, the Accreditation Coordinator shall attempt to resolve the appeal and notify the student of a decision within 30 calendar days.
4. If the decision of the Accreditation Coordinator is not agreeable to all parties involved, a final appeal may be made to the Superintendent within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Accreditation Coordinator's decision.
5. The appeal to the Superintendent shall meet the guidelines of item #2 above.
6. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal, the Superintendent shall assemble an Appeals Board to review the appeal, and the Appeals Board shall:
   a. Convene within 30 calendar days of the date of the appeal submitted to the Superintendent.
   b. Record all proceedings.
   c. Review original appeal and all supporting documentation.
   d. Set forth its decision and prepare a written response with the vote of each member indicated and/or any failure of a member to vote.
   e. Reach a decision without unreasonable or unnecessary delay.

        f. Submit a copy of the proceedings, findings, and decision to the Superintendent within 30 calendar days of the date of the submission of the original appeal.

        g. Copy of the Board's final decision shall be mailed to the Appellant within five (5) business days of submission of final ruling to the Superintendent.

        h. Decision of the Appeals Board is final. If the Appeals Board decision is in favor of the Appellant, provisions for correction shall be made as quickly as possible.

7. The Appeals Board shall be comprised of six members as follows:

        a. One member of the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's Human Resources Division.

        b. Two at large members selected by the SCFA Advisory Committee.

        c. One SCFA certified instructor.

        d. One educational professional.

        e. One Chief Fire Officer from a SC fire department who will be designated as the Chairperson.

8. Four members of the Appeals Board shall constitute a quorum.

9. No fewer than four "affirmative" votes shall be required for any decision.

10. Failure of the Appeals Board to affirmatively act on any matter pending before it shall leave the original action intact.

11. The Appeals Board can be established to resolve disagreements related to the certification testing system at the discretion of the Superintendent.

12. The Appeals Board will meet only when called upon by the Superintendent.

13. No Appeals Board member shall vote or otherwise act on any matter in which they have a personal interest.

14. When an Appeals Board member is excluded due to conflict of interest, the Superintendent may appoint an alternative member to represent the same classification as the original member.

XXIV. Reciprocity

1. Reciprocity is the awarding of certification, without any required testing, to those individuals who have been certified at an occupational level by an IFSAC or Pro Board accredited entity.

2. Reciprocal transcript credit will be given to those individuals who have completed training from the National Fire Academy (NFA) or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as identified and approved by the SCFA.

        a. Courses must be equivalent to catalog course(s) offered by the SCFA.

3. Reciprocity may be granted to an applicant who meets the following criteria:

        a. The applicant is an active member of a South Carolina fire department.

        b. Submits and Application for Reciprocity.

        c. Certificates submitted must be an original or a verifiable certificate from an entity that grants IFSAC or Pro Board certification with a legible seal number.

4. Reciprocity can not be granted for SCFA courses not currently accredited by IFSAC or Pro Board except in the following circumstance:

        a. Reciprocal transcript credit may be awarded for IFSAC and/or Pro Board certificates for Technical Rescuer and Hazardous Materials Technician to cease upon Accreditation of the SCFA to these levels.

        b. Reciprocal transcript credit may be awarded for Hazardous Materials Awareness (HMA) and Hazardous Materials Operations (HMO) when an applicant provides IFSAC and/or Pro Board Firefighter I.

        c. Reciprocal transcript credit may be awarded for Auto Extrication when an applicant provides IFSAC and/or Pro Board Firefighter II.

        d. Reciprocal transcript credit may be awarded for Emergency Vehicle Driver Training (EVDT) when an applicant provides IFSAC and/or Pro Board for a Driver Operator Series course (Pumper, Aerial, Airport Rescue Firefighter, Mobile Water Supply)

5. Transcripts may be used in place of certificates as long as they are original and verifiable from an entity that grants IFSAC or Pro Board certification and the seal number is legible.

6. Once received by the SCFA, ~~RE~~ applications will be logged in by the Accreditation Coordinator or authorized designee and distributed to authorized personnel for review.

7. The Accreditation Coordinator or authorized designee will review the Application for Reciprocity, make a determination of reciprocity, update SCFA firefighter records, and send notice to the applicant of its determination.

8. In disputed situations regarding reciprocity applications, the Accreditation Manager will determine whether or not reciprocity credit will be granted.

9. Students registering for the SCFA Airport Rescue Firefighter (ARFF) training do not need to apply for Reciprocity to gain entrance into the course, but shall meet pre-requisite requirements for course entrance to include training to the national professional qualification standards for Firefighter I and Firefighter II.

XXV. <u>Challenge Test Procedure</u>

1. Certification Written Tests administered independently of a SCFA training course(s) shall require an individual who successfully completes the required pre-requisite SCFA training course(s) and any other required pre-requisites to "challenge" the independently administered certification level test(s).

        a. A student must register for this challenge test in the same manner as they would for any other SCFA course.

        b. Manipulative skills assessments are not required as part of this challenge test procedure.

        c. Requests must be submitted in writing either by email or standard mail.

        d. Candidates may be required to take the manipulative skills assessment in addition to the required certification level written test.

2. The Accreditation Coordinator manages the challenge test process with Regional Coordinators and designated SCFA staff members assisting with its administration.

3. The written testing process for challenge tests will be administered in accordance with the Written (Cognitive) Test Administration and Retesting Policy for Written Exams Sections of this policy.

4. Approvals to enter the certification test challenge process will be supported by a complete review of the applicant's training record, job experience, and other supporting documents with cross-reference to the Certification Level Test Matrix.

5. The Certification Level Test Matrix will be produced and updated regularly by the Accreditation Coordinator to facilitate ease in determining prerequisite requirements for challenge test.
6. Individuals wanting to challenge an Accredited course must have the IFSAC certificate(s) for all of the pre-requisite courses below it.
    a. For example, an individual wanted to challenge the accredited exam for Fire Instructor II must have an IFSAC certification for Fire Instructor I.
7. If there is any question of uncertainty regarding qualification, training record, or other documentation, the Regional Coordinator will forward the request to challenge the certification test to the Accreditation Coordinator.
8. The Accreditation Manager is the final authority responsible making a determination on the request to challenge a certification test.
9. A written test will be mandatory for all professional certification levels with the exception of those designated to be evaluated utilizing a group-based assessment methodology.
10. When performed in the Regions, the Regional Coordinators will ensure proper registrations are submitted, course information entered into to the SCFA database, and proper written and manipulative testing is performed.
11. Challenge tests conducted under the provisions of this policy governing Remote Testing shall be performed in compliance with the provisions of that section, and SCFA records management and retention requirements completed by the Accreditation Coordinator or his/her designee.
12. Regional Coordinators shall work with local fire department training coordinators and/or other authorized persons to accomplish manipulative skills testing when required but no maximum class sizes will be modified to accommodate challenge requests.
13. All challenge test packages will be completed and forwarded to the Accreditation and Certification section for review and processing.
14. All SCFA policies concerning retesting and appeals shall apply to the certification test challenge process.

XXVI. Remote Testing Procedure

1. Remote testing is the SCFA process used to allow qualifying individuals to take certification level tests outside the state of South Carolina.
2. The remote testing program will be managed by the Accreditation Coordinator
3. Individuals who qualify for remote testing services must meet the all of the following criteria:
    a. Reside outside the state of SC.
    b. Not part of or affiliated with a SC fire department.
    c. Did not make a passing score on a previously taken certification level test administered by the SCFA or meets the requirements for "challenge test" under the provisions of this policy.
4. The Accreditation Coordinator or his/her designee will ensure all of the following requirements for remote testing are completed:
    a. Remote testing application is completed and submitted to the SCFA.
    b. All of the prerequisite requirements in item #3 above have been satisfied.
    c. A Remote Proctor Agreement is signed and returned to the SCFA prior to any remote test being administered.

d. The course is pre-existing or properly logged into the SCFA database.
e. A SCFA Individual Registration Form is properly filled out and submitted with the appropriate course code and section number assigned.
f. Remote testing instructions and answer key instructions are sent to the test proctor.
g. A version of the applicable certification test is either pre-existing as a "remote" version or the Testing Coordinator develops a version for the specified request.
h. The proper answer key exists for the version or the certification test being used.
i. A separate file is created for the person requesting remote testing and includes copies of all documents, tests, skill sheets, and instructions pertaining to the remote test and is maintained as part of SCFA records management system either as a stand-alone challenge test or added to existing course package as a retest.
j. Scoring is completed, SCFA database records updated and notice sent to the requesting party.
k. All SCFA policies and procedures governing retesting and appeals shall apply to Remote Testing conducted under the provisions of this policy.