

The Association of Firearm & Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) Certification Program

An Overview

History of the Certification Program

- AFTE Determination that certification program was needed (1996)
- AFTE membership voted to proceed with the program with funding from NIJ(1997)
- Cooperative Personnel Services (CPS) awarded contract (1998)
- Occupational Analysis Performed (1998)
- Test questions submitted from 87 SME's (1998-99)
- Pilot practical tests assembled and SME qualified

History of the Certification Program

- Pilot written test at AFTE 1999 Training Conference to 100 examiners, free of charge
- Revisions of test questions from examiner comments
- Revised form used in subsequent tests beginning 2000
- Effective June 1, 2006 the applicant must have a BS or equivalent 4 year college degree

Summary Report of AFTE Certification Program Development

The report was published in the Fall 2000 AFTE Journal and contains:

- Program Description and Summary
- Scope and Methodology
- Detailed Findings and Analysis
- Discussion

It is also published on the AFTE.org website

CPS Job Analysis Report

Also published on the website is the CPS Job Analysis Report on the Occupational Analysis and Certification Examination Development

- Documents the steps that AFTE and CPS took in the Certification Program development
- Appendices include; job description of firearm/toolmark examiner, job analysis questionnaire and results, KSA linkage to questions and practical tests, and content analysis of written exam

CPS Job Analysis Report

“The occupational analysis and test development procedures in this report were performed to ensure that the resulting AFTE certification examinations are in compliance with applicable professional and legal standards, such as : the Civil Rights Act of 1991; the American with Disabilities Act (ADA); Age Discrimination Legislation; the *Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection Procedures*; the *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures*; and the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*” (Introduction)

Application Requirements

- **AFTE Membership**
- **Training**
- **Casework**
- **Education**
- **Application forms available on AFTE website**
- **Application and payments submitted to AFTE Certification Program Chairperson**
- **Applications are reviewed**
- **Qualifying applicants notified of next test available**

Written Tests

- Three (3) separate certification specialties; Firearm Evidence Examination & Identification, Toolmark Evidence Examination & Identification, and Gunshot Residue Evidence Examination & Identification (Proximity Determination)
- Each test is comprised of 100 multiple questions
- Three (3) hours allowed for each proctored test
- 70-100 correct is passing
- Reported as pass/fail
- May retest in one year
- Questions can be appealed for reconsideration

Written Tests

- Test results collected on ScanTron sheets.
- All test materials collected, including test content secrecy attestations sent to CPS for grading
- Report is sent to Chairperson of passing and failing applicants
- Notification of results sent by the Chair
- Those who pass the written test(s) are qualified to apply to take the practical test(s) at their home laboratory, or other sponsoring laboratory

Practical Tests

- Applicants submit documents and fees to Chair as previously in written test application.
- The applicant must identify the proctor that will be administering the test at their laboratory
- Proctor must be a AFTE Certified Examiner in all three specialties, or a is a member of a professional organization with an ethics code (e.g. AAFS, ASCLD, IAI)
- Date for receipt of test(s) determined by examiner, proctor, and test source contact (USACIL)

Practical Tests

- Upon test return, the results are communicated from USACIL to the Chair, who has the test keys.
- Email communication sent to passing test taker as a first official notification of AFTE Certification in that respective specialty.
- Signed and sealed hardcopy certificate is sent to the examiner at a later date.
- Persons who fail the practical test can retest in 1 year.

Reference Lists

All the written test questions are referenced in peer reviewed literature and/or text books

The list is published on the website

- References common to all three tests**
- References separated by discipline; Firearms, Toolmark, Gunshot Residue**

Recertification

- Certification is active for 5 years after the first notification.
- The examiner must apply for recertification and document points in training received and given.
- 100 CEU's training received, 50 CEU's training given
- Documentation of successful yearly proficiency tests
- Application and documents are sent to the Chair for review.
- If the requirements are achieved, a recertification document is sent to the applicant.
- The recertification is valid for an additional 5 years.

Certifications Awarded

- List is found on website
- It is a compendium of all successful certificate holders from initial certification, date the certification was awarded, and in which discipline
- It is not a current list of certification holders, and is more a historical reference
- 88 Members are certified in at least one discipline

Testing Fees

- Are paid during application by check or PayPal
- Written Test; \$50.00
- Practical Test \$200.00
- Recertification \$25.00

Future Projects

- **Test questions and Reference List refresh**
- **Institute an On-Line written tests for those who can not always make the yearly conference**
- **Application for accreditation to the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB)**

More Information

WWW.AFTE.ORG

