



Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification Policies & Procedures

This document outlines the policies and procedures to be followed by all parties involved with administering the World Aquatic Coalition, Inc. DBA Aquatic Exercise Association's Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification.

The policies and procedures in this document are in effect from January 1, 2009.

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Introduction

This document outlines the policies and procedures to be followed by all parties involved with administering the Aquatic Exercise Association's Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification. The purpose is to implement structure and governance appropriate to protect against undue influence that could compromise the integrity of the certification process. The specific protocol outlined will ensure fairness, security, reliability and validity of the examination process. All personnel involved in the certification process in any capacity must read and adhere to all policies and procedures set forth in this document. Any person failing to comply with any part will be subject to immediate disciplinary action and possible termination. Policy and Procedure will be reviewed, updated and improved regularly to ensure problem prevention and quality control.

AEA's Mission Statement

The Aquatic Exercise Association (AEA) is a not-for-profit educational organization committed to the advancement of aquatic fitness worldwide.

AEA's Purpose

AEA is committed to increasing awareness, education and networking opportunities to benefit professionals as well as the general public. With AEA, achieving healthy lifestyles through aquatic fitness is a team effort, supported globally.

AEA desires to embrace cultural diversity in our industry to assure that individuals worldwide can enjoy and employ the benefits of aquatic fitness programs regardless of age, ability, goals or interests.

Certification Oversight Committee

The Certification Oversight Committee (COC) is a committee comprised of professionals from the Aquatic Fitness Industry and other industry professions to represent public health and safety. This Oversight Committee is responsible for overseeing all affairs and matters regarding Certifications and acts independently of the Aquatic Exercise Association Education and Membership Departments. These affairs and matters include establishing and upholding standards for initial certification, recertification, and continuing education, issuing certificates to individuals who meet these standards, and establishing and maintaining a disciplinary process for certified individuals.

Furthermore, Aquatic Exercise Association Certification Key Staff and Contracted Agents are responsible for upholding certification standards as set forth by the Certification Oversight Committee. This includes reviewing, approving, rejecting, or deferring applications for certification, establishing and maintaining ethical and professional standards for certified individuals, establishing examination security practices, and implementing appropriate disciplinary actions against certified individuals who have violated the standards.

The Certification Oversight Committee and AEA are dedicated and committed to protecting the public by awarding certification only to those professionals who have successfully demonstrated proficiency and skill and met all requirements established by the Certification Oversight Committee. AEA's Certification Oversight Committee oversees all affairs and policies regarding

certification to assure validity and reliability as well as to address changes within the industry, assuring that it remains applicable to current industry standards.

COC Responsibilities and Purpose

1. Establish, manage and disseminate the standards and procedures for candidate eligibility to partake in the certification examination.
2. Establish, manage and disseminate the standards and procedures for examination administration, security, policy and procedures.
3. Establish, manage and disseminate examination development and developmental procedures.
4. Establish, manage and disseminate policy and procedure for certification renewal and continuing education to ensure public health and safety.
5. Establish and enforce disciplinary policy and procedure for certification, recertification and continuing education.
6. Deliberate with AEA Board of Directors, AEA Key Staff Administration and the Examination and Testing Service Agent to invigilate certified professionals to ensure representation and commitment of the AEA Code of Ethics.
7. Establish and disseminate public and professional recognition of candidates who have successfully obtained certification and or meet all renewal requirements.

AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification Examination

The AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification (AFPC) is based upon the *Aquatic Fitness Professional Manual*. Originally published in 1995, the current edition was developed under the guidance of Managing Editor, June Lindle Chewning, M.A., B.S., and coordinated the efforts of 17 contributing industry experts/authors and 24 industry expert/manual reviewers. The 6th Edition of the manual, published by Human Kinetics, will be released in 2010 featuring the most current research in aquatic fitness in addition to recently revised industry standards and guidelines.

With the assistance of over 30 evaluators and reviewers, the AEA AFPC Examination procedures have been revised following examination guidelines set forth by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) and the National Assessment Institute (NAT). By following certification protocols deemed appropriate by such organizations, AEA aims to increase public health, safety and confidence in aquatic fitness programming led by certified professionals. The certification process has been developed using consistent, recognized certification practices legally defensible in a court of law.

AEA currently holds approximately 50 AFPC Examinations per year in the United States. AEA has been conducting Certification Examinations under strict policy and procedure since 1995. AEA has procedures in place to minimize irregularities and/or facility situations that can affect candidate examination results and/or participation.

The AFPC Examination dates and locations are listed on the AEA website. Specific examination application materials are created and formatted as a PDF file to be used in bulk mailing (90 days prior to the Examination) and posted on the AEA website for download.

Examination Development

Following is a summary of the procedures AEA follows each time the certification examination is developed or revised.

Learning objectives are developed, refined, and revised to industry standards and professional practice by a group of industry experts. These objectives form the base of the examination process including the job analysis. Many experts and professionals in the aquatic fitness industry participate in a regular job analysis survey to determine the weight of the learning objectives content in the examination process. Test specifications are determined from the job analysis survey.

Based upon CLEAR, NOCA and NAT recommendations, potential candidates are contacted and screened in order to select a question writing committee. The committee represents qualified individuals who possess expertise in content, industry standards, and test development. Committee members follow specific item development guidelines outlined in the AEA Examination Item Writer Manual. Subject area experts develop questions mapped to specific learning objectives. The questions are then subject to an Item Review Committee and mapped directly to examination preparation material. Questions are written in the recommended multiple choice format and contain items that test knowledge, application, and practical skills. After questions are written, reviewed, and revised, they are placed in a secure test item bank. Questions are chosen for the examination based upon the weight of the question and to represent test specifications determined by the job analysis. Unused questions remain in the question bank for consideration during revisions.

The content weighting and number of items used from each objective area for the current certification examination is based on test specifications determined by the 2005-2006 Job Analysis Survey. Each question in the test question database was identified with a specific objective by the test question writer and agreed upon by the item review committee. The Level of Difficulty (1, 2 or 3) and domain classification (knowledge, practical, or application) were assigned to ensure variety in question type and level of difficulty.

The resulting 100-question, multiple-choice written exam is designed to test a standard level of theoretical and practical competence and skill for aquatic fitness professionals. This is a timed examination with 1 hour and 45 minutes allotted for completion, approximately 1 minute per question.

Successful completion of the AFPC demonstrates both a theoretical and practical standard of knowledge and skill required for aquatic fitness professionals to deliver safe and effective aquatic fitness programming. The AFPC provides a higher level of service to the community by establishing a standard level of competency of the aquatic fitness professional.

Purpose of Certification

The AFPC was developed to increase public health, safety and confidence in aquatic fitness programming led by certified professionals.

The AFPC is designed to test a standard level of theoretical and practical competence and skill for aquatic fitness professionals to assure the highest level of programming and implementation to a wide range of participants.

The AFPC offers certified professionals confidence and security through up-to-date industry standards, research-based theory and practice, and continuing education.

Examination and Testing Service Agent

AEA is currently in contract with Fitness Learning Systems (FLS) to assist in examination development, security, administration, scoring and reporting of the Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification. FLS offers the highest level of services with regards to examination administration and has been instrumental in ensuring public health and safety through developing fair, non-discriminatory procedures to ensure validity and reliability of the examination.

FLS Services

- Job analysis and role delineation studies.
- Overseeing item writing, review and revision.
- Validation and verification of examination content.
- Examination development based on test specifications.
- Maintenance of a secure computer based question bank, test bank, and item statistics.
- Psychometric analysis and reporting on item stability, examination validity and reliability.
- Examination printing and processing.
- Development and implementation of Exam Administrator Policies and Procedures and Exam Administrator training.
- Coordination and secure delivery of paper exams and necessary paperwork to Exam Administrator.
- Scoring and reporting candidate results.
- Confidential and secure notification of examination score to candidates
- Confidential and secure storage of examination results and candidate information.

AEA Key Staff-Certification

AEA Key Staff assist in certification examination administration under the recommendations established by the Certification Oversight Committee and FLS. AEA Key Staff are required to sign confidentiality agreements and follow all policy and procedures with regards to candidate information, examination results and reporting, and recertification policy to ensure confidentiality and protection of all Candidate information.

AEA Key Staff Roles

- Verification and validation of candidate eligibility and application information.
- Provide notification and direction to eligible candidates with regards to preparation, study objectives and overall recommendations established by the Certification Oversight Committee.
- Locating examination sites and verification of exam site requirements.
- Validate the examination site with regards to qualifying with ADA requirements for special need candidates.
- Secure examination reproduction and shipment to FLS for distribution via a trackable method.

- Administrate required responsibilities with regards to candidates needing special assistance.
- Hire Exam Administrators for each certification location.
- AEA database entry of examination score, date, location of examination into candidate records.
- Candidate communication with regards to complete eligibility.
- Mail candidate certificates and accompanying paper work for maintaining certification upon successful completion of all established requirements.
- Mail retake policies to candidates that did not pass the examination.
- Administrate AEA continuing education applications and policies and procedures to eligible providers.
- Review and approve/disapprove continuing education provider application submissions.
- Review and approve/disapprove CEC petition forms of non-approved AEA continuing education providers' forms submitted by certified professionals.
- Verify and validate certified professionals certification renewal requirements.
- Secure storage of certification renewal documents and certified professional data.

Certification Process

PART A: Recommended Preparation

- AEA highly recommends that all candidates, regardless of educational background, prepare with a **minimum** of 8-12 weeks advance study utilizing the AFPC Study Objectives in the Candidate Handbook.
- AEA highly recommends a minimum of 6 months practical experience.
- To adequately prepare, candidates are encouraged to follow the detailed timeline provided in the Certification Candidate Handbook.
- It is highly recommended to complete the Certification Application process at least 30 days prior to the scheduled examination.

PART B: Candidate Eligibility Criteria and Application Process

- Candidates must be at least 18 years of age.
- Candidates must provide proof of current and valid CPR and AED certification. If the candidate does not have current CPR/AED certification, he/she may sit for the examination but the AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification will not be valid until CPR/AED certification documentation is provided.

Application Process

- Pre-application is mandatory and candidates must complete the Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification Application (AFPC Application) prior to registering for any examination. It is highly recommended that Candidates apply at least 30 days prior to the examination date. Absolutely no candidate applications will be accepted within 14 days of examination date.
- AFPC Application can be downloaded online at www.aeawave.com
- Upon completing the application, Candidates will receive email or postal mailed confirmation of their acceptance. Candidates will also be directed to obtain additional downloadable files to assist with the examination procedures.

- Candidates without Internet access may request a paper copy of the AFPC Application Form to be sent by mail or by fax. Upon completing the mail/fax application process the Candidate will receive mail/fax confirmation including additional files to assist with the examination procedures.
- Candidates must bring the Confirmation/Receipt/Invoice to the Examination.
- Current and valid CPR/AED is required to obtain certification. Verification can be submitted in advance with the AFPC Application or brought to the examination site.
- Information submitted on the Certification Examination Application is kept strictly confidential.

On-Site Registration

- Candidates will sign in with the Exam Administrator at the examination site.
- Candidates NOT participating in the Review Course offered prior to the Examination must arrive by 3:30 pm.
- Photo identification is required from all exam candidates at the examination site.
- Cell phones are not permitted in any examination.
- Candidates must bring No. 2 pencils to complete the examination.

Special Assistance

AEA will assist with special arrangements for Examination Candidates who have a medical and/or learning disability that may prevent taking the examination under standard conditions.

Candidates requiring special assistance due to a disability must complete the Certification Examination Disability Assistance Form. This form must be completed at least 30 days prior to the examination. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), documentation of the disability from a qualified health care provider must be submitted with this completed form. AEA reserves the right to review and evaluate the request and will make every effort to provide the requested accommodations when feasible.

Candidates are required to complete the disability section of the APFC Application. Candidates must select and acknowledge or decline the Certification Examination Disability Assistance as needed. The Disability Assistance Form will then be emailed separately for completion. If the Candidate is applying by mail or fax, it is recommended that he/she request the Disability Assistance Form with the Application to assure that it is submitted within the required timeframe. The form and necessary documentation must be received no later than 30 days prior to the examination date.

Application Appeal Process

AEA reserves the right to deny any application that does not meet the AFPC requirements. If application is denied, the individual can appeal and request that the application be reviewed by submitting an email or faxed request stating reason(s) why he/she should be eligible and provide any supporting documentation. All appeals will be reviewed and ruled on by the Certification Oversight Committee in 7 working days upon receipt and the individual notified in writing whether the appeal has been accepted or denied.

AEA Exam Application Appeal

Email: info@aeawave.com

Fax: 941.486.8820

Cancellation / Refund of Fees

Cancellation Policy - All cancellations must be submitted in writing and received 72 hours PRIOR to the scheduled examination. Cancellation fees are 30% of total monies paid or a minimum of \$25.00; whichever is higher.

Should it be necessary for AEA to cancel an examination, all Candidates will be notified by email or phone. Candidates will be given the opportunity to transfer to another location or a full refund of application fees will be provided.

Candidates who do not arrive on site to take the examination at the scheduled date and location (No Show) and who do not cancel within the 72-hour cancellation period will forfeit the application fee. Should the candidate wish to take the exam at a later date, it will be necessary to complete the application process again and pay the required fees.

Candidate Comments

Upon completion of the AFP Examination, all Candidates will be asked to complete the AFPC Examination Evaluation Form. This form includes an area for comments and concerns regarding the examination process. All evaluation forms will be returned to AEA for review by the COC.

Exam Administration Procedures

An outsourced testing agent manages all Certification Examination materials and testing procedures. Fitness Learning Systems (FLS) is the independent testing agent contracted by AEA to administer, score and analyze the AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Examination.

The potential Exam Administrator is hired based upon the Host Facility recommendation; contact information on this individual is sent from AEA Corporate to FLS. FLS then oversees all testing operations from this point forward. FLS emails the potential Exam Administrator the Exam Administrator Manual, which outlines required procedures.

The Exam Administrator confirms his/her intent to fulfill the obligations and responsibilities by submitting the Examination Administrator Agreement included in the Exam Administrator Manual. Any incident occurring on-site that could potentially compromise the validity of testing procedures must be documented by the Exam Administrator and reported to FLS using the Certification Examination Irregularity Form included in the Exam Administrator Manual.

On-site Exam Security & Facilitation

The Exam Administrator will open the materials sent directly to him/her from FLS during exam set up and verify all materials to the packing slip. Any discrepancy must be reported using the Certification Examination Irregularity Form. Should a discrepancy occur that could hinder the Examination, the Exam Administrator must immediately notify the scheduled emergency contact.

Candidate verification and admittance will be facilitated through a registration area using the Candidate List included in examination materials provided by AEA/FLS. The list includes candidate name, address, email and CPR/AED expiration for verification by the Exam Administrator. *Absolutely no walk in candidates will be admitted.*

1. Exam registration area will be set up 30 minutes prior to the examination start time.
2. Exam Administrator will verify identification of Candidates and note verification on the Candidate list. *All Candidates must show a picture ID or at least 2 other forms of identification from a government agency or educational facility (i.e. voter's ID, college ID, social security card.) If a candidate has no acceptable identification, he/she cannot be admitted to the Examination and a Certification Examination Irregularity Form must be completed.*
3. Exam Administrator will confirm proof of CPR/AED on the Candidate List if provided at the Examination. This information will already be included on the Candidate list if the Candidate provided the information during the application process.
4. Exam Administrator will note any special considerations/situations on the Candidate List and a Certification Examination Irregularity Form is completed if necessary.

Exam Scoring & Results

All candidates must receive a passing rate on the AFPC Examination in order to receive AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification.

A minimum score of 68% must be received to receive AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification. In 2008, 72% of all Candidates successfully passed the AFPC Examination.

Certification Candidates scoring below the minimum exam requirement may retake the course at a future date and location within a one-year period. The retake fee is \$65.00.

FLS is the independent testing agent contracted by AEA to administer, score and analyze the AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Examination. AFPC Examination results are sent from FLS via mail to the Candidate's address indicated on the Exam Scoring Sheet within 4-6 weeks. Exam scores /results cannot be obtained by phone or email. FLS provides the Candidate with an Individual Mastery Report, which includes the exam score with a breakdown of responses for each examination objective. This information is valuable to candidates as it reviews strengths and weaknesses relating to each objective.

If CPR/AED has not been verified, examination scores will be mailed to the Candidate. However, the Candidate will NOT receive an official certificate from AEA, nor recognition as an AEA Certified Aquatic Fitness Professional, until CPR/AED has been verified.

Exam Scoring Appeals

A candidate who earns a failing score on the examination may request hand scoring of his/her exam. A written request and a \$25 scoring fee must be submitted in writing to FLS within 60 days of the examination score release date. Upon receipt of the written request and required fee, the candidate's answer sheet will be re-scored by hand and results provided in writing to the candidate from FLS.

Exam Retakes

Candidates who do not successfully complete the AEA AFPC Examination may apply to retake the exam at a scheduled exam location within a period of one-year from the date of the initial exam. The Retake Fee of \$65.00 also allows participation in the AFP Review Course when offered on the day of the exam (available at most locations). Personalized exam scores

provided by FLS indicate the general subject areas where the candidate should concentrate studies in order to improve performance on the retake exam.

Cancellation of Exam Scores

The AEA Certification Oversight Committee (COC) reserves the right to withhold or cancel examination scores if there is reason to question the validity based upon suspected misconduct by the Candidate or examination irregularities beyond the control of the Candidate.

- Suspected Misconduct – if the COC determines that there is sufficient evidence to question the validity of the score, the score may be cancelled and the Candidate notified in writing.
- Examination Irregularity – if the COC determines that a situation jeopardized the validity of the examination scores (i.e. missing page from exam booklet), scores may be cancelled. All Candidates affected will be notified and provided an opportunity to retake the examination at a future time free of charge.

Disciplinary Action

The following situations will necessitate disciplinary action to be taken by the AEA Certification Oversight Committee (COC).

1. Using fraud or deception to obtain, or attempt to obtain, certification.
2. Intentionally assisting another person to use fraud or deception to obtain, or attempt to obtain, certification.
3. Falsification of certification documents.
4. Removing, or attempting to remove, test materials or notes from the exam room.

If a potential disciplinary situation occurs, the case is reviewed by the AEA Certification Oversight Committee and vote is called for decision. Disciplinary action may involve refusal of the Examination Application or revocation of Certification status.

Certification Renewal Policies & Procedures

AEA Certified Aquatic Fitness Professionals are required to renew their certification every two years. Early renewals can be submitted within 6 months prior to certification if all renewal requirements are met.

AEA Certified Aquatic Fitness Professionals must obtain a minimum of 15 AEA Approved CECs to obtain recertification. CECs over the minimum requirement do not carry over to the next renewal period. CECs begin at Zero (0) on the next term.

A list of AEA Approved Continuing Education Providers can be found at the AEA website, under Education/CEC Providers/Provider Listing. AEA may issue CECs to non-approved educational programs upon receipt and review of the Non-Approved Provider Petition Form.

AEA Certified Aquatic Fitness Professionals must maintain current and valid CPR and AED Certifications throughout the renewal term. AEA CECs allocated for CPR/AED certification depend on the CPR and/or AED organizer-provider.

There is a \$50.00 Certification Renewal Fee. This fee represents on-time renewals that are

received prior to the expiration date and with complete documentation and all requirements met. AEA Certified Aquatic Fitness Professionals have a 60-day grace period following certification expiration date in order to renew without paying a late fee.

Late fees apply if AEA does not receive the AFPC Renewal within 60 days of expiration; the AEA Website provides current procedures and fees for late renewals.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

AEA does not discriminate among examination candidates on the basis of gender, age, religion, race, national origin, marital status or disability.

Confidentiality / Privacy Policy

AEA is committed to protecting the privacy of information provided during the Certification application, Examination and Renewal procedures. Only authorized employees have access to exam candidate files and are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of that information.

No information submitted to AEA or FLS during the certification process, including but not limited to examination scores, will be released to a third party without written authorization from the Candidate.

With the exception of verification of certification, written consent from the Candidate is required prior to the release of any information from the individual's certification records.

Candidate privacy is important to AEA. Application for the AFPC requires only necessary information to process exam materials. If a Candidate provides an email address upon registration he/she will receive notice of AEA sponsored education opportunities and/or product/education promotions from AEA affiliated organizations. To stop receiving email notifications, a written request to AEA will remove the individual from AEA's mailing list.

Host Site Eligibility & Requirements

A host site for the AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification Examination must meet certain criteria to provide an appropriate testing environment. The host site must provide an exam room for exclusive use during the requested hours. Host site must be aware that the Examination schedule cannot be altered or changed for any reason.

- Host site manager/owner or authorized director must approve and authorize the Examination Site Requirements and Agreement form. This form attests that the site meets AEA AFPC Examination requirements. The signed agreement must be returned to AEA Corporate by mail (scanned email copy with actual signature is acceptable) before the Examination Host Site can be approved.
- Examinations require scheduling 8 months prior to the requested date.
- Blackout dates are in effect. Blackout dates include, but are not limited to, all federal holidays and religious observations.
- Host site must assist AEA on selecting an Exam Administrator to facilitate the Examination.
- Host site must provide on-site staff to assist with facility questions/concerns and emergency procedures.

- Host site must allow male and female participants and provide separate male and female locker rooms.
- Host site must disclose in advance any special facility requirements, including, but not limited to, considerations for accessing the site, facility registration/sign in/waiver of liability procedures.
- Host site must provide adequate on-site parking for all Candidates.
- Host site must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provide additional examination accommodations, if necessary.
- Host site must receive and secure required event shipments for at least 7 days prior & 3 days after event.
- Examination Room Requirements:
 - Available a minimum of 45 minutes preceding the scheduled start time and 30 minutes following the scheduled end time.
 - Quiet and undisturbed room with tables & chairs and adequate lighting.
 - Seating to accommodate 2 people per 6-foot table or 3 people per 8-foot table (minimum capacity of 20 required).
 - Additional space for registration, necessary materials and to accommodate the Exam Administrator.
 - Whiteboard, chalkboard or flip chart.

Contact Information

AEA strives to provide a beneficial and ethical service to the fitness industry and the public with the Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification program and adherence to strict certification policies and procedures.

Please use the following contact information for questions or if additional information is required.

Aquatic Exercise Association

AEA Corporate Mailing Address
 PO Box 1609
 Nokomis, FL 34274-1609
 Phone Number: 941.486.8600
 Toll-Free: 888.232.9283
 Fax: 941.486.8820
info@AEAwave.com

Aquatic Exercise Association
Certification Oversight Committee (COC)

info@AEAwave.com

Address inquiry to
 June Chewing, Chair

Fitness Learning Systems

1012 Harrison Ave. #3
 Harrison, OH 45030
 Phone Number: 513.367.1251
 Toll Free: 888.221.1612
 Fax: 513.574.9857
Info@FitnessLearningSystems.com

