



HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY

Specialists in Radiation Safety

July 23, 2011

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Subject: Working Group on IRPA Guiding Principles for Radiation Protection Professionals on Professional Qualification and Certification of Radiation Experts

Dear Ken:

In response to your request of Associate Society Officers, the Health Physics Society (HPS) provides this information regarding professional qualifications and certification of radiation safety professionals. Members of the HPS have a pathway for professional certification in Health Physics through the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP), which has provided professional certification in Health Physics for over 50 years.

The HPS maintains a long-standing and close working relationship with both the ABHP and the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP), which represents the body of ABHP-certified radiation safety professionals. The HPS annually appoints a liaison between itself and the AAHP, and has formal processes for nominating HPS members to serve on the ABHP.

The ABHP certification process includes, in part, requirements for a college level degree, professional level work experience, and satisfactory completion of a two-part exam prepared by subject matter experts. The [Prospectus](#) describes the process and requirements for certification in detail.

The ABHP is very interested in participating on the working group to develop *IRPA Guiding Principles for Radiation Protection Professionals on Professional Qualification and Certification of Radiation Experts*. The ABHP, with over 50 years of experience in certifying radiation safety professionals, will be an important contributor to this effort.

Offices of the Executive Secretary, 1313 Dolley Madison Blvd., Suite 402, McLean, VA 22101

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IRPA Working Group on Professional Qualifications and Certification

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Please contact Kent Lambert, the Chair of the ABHP, at kent.lambert@drexel.edu or by phone at 215-255-7860 with information regarding participation on this working group.

Sincerely,



Kathryn H. Pryor, CHP
President

Enclosure: ABHP Prospectus

cc: Kent Lambert, ABHP
Kathy Shingleton, AAHP
Brett Burk

Prospectus for the
AMERICAN BOARD OF HEALTH PHYSICS



Information regarding requirements for Certification, examination procedures and fees, and application materials are available on this website. Additional information is available from:

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AMERICAN BOARD OF HEALTH PHYSICS

History

Shortly after its organization, the Health Physics Society established a Committee to study the need for certification of health physicists and to develop plans for certification if this appeared to be desirable. After an intensive study, the Committee recommended that an American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) be established to develop standards and procedures, to examine candidates, and to issue written proof of certification to individuals who have satisfied the requirements established by the Board. The Board of Directors of the Society decided that these recommendations had merit and appointed a temporary American Board of Health Physics on 8 November 1958.

The temporary ABHP developed a set of minimum requirements for certification after carefully reviewing the professional background of 100 selected individuals believed to be representative of those recognized as competent health physicists, and submitted them to the membership of the Society for comment. At the Annual Meeting of the Society in June 1959, the matter was discussed in an open meeting and there was general support for the plan. The Board of Directors of the Society formally established the ABHP as an independent organization by approving an amendment to the By-Laws of the Society on 29 October 1959.

The ABHP was incorporated in the State of New York in December 1960 as a non-profit educational body. The Board has eight members, with each member serving a five-year term.

A certification renewal program was established by the Board in 1977 to ensure the continued professional development of Certified Health Physicists (CHPs). In 1978 the Board offered a specialty certification in power reactor health physics which was discontinued in 1993.

In 1985, the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) was formed, and incorporated as a separate entity in 1988. The primary purpose of the Academy is to establish an organization which permits the direct input of Certified Health Physicists into the selection of Board members and to the ongoing program of the Board. In 1994, the corporate structures of the ABHP and the AAHP were consolidated under the AAHP.

Purposes of the Board

The basic purposes of the ABHP are to:

1. Elevate the standards and advance the profession of health physics by encouraging its study and improving its practice
2. Encourage and insist on the highest standards of professional ethics and integrity in the practice of health physics
3. Determine the competence of professional health physicists and arrange, control, and conduct investigations and examinations to evaluate the qualifications of voluntary candidates for certification by the Board
4. Grant and issue certificates in the field of health physics to qualified applicants and maintain a registry of holders of such certificates

5. Sponsor a Certification Renewal Program, including issuance of “recertified” seals to qualified ABHP diplomats who have demonstrated their continued professional involvement in health physics.

Meaning of Certification

Certification indicates that the recipient has completed certain requirements of study and professional experience, which the Board considers to constitute an adequate foundation in health physics, and has passed an examination designed to test competence in this field. Holders of ABHP certification may identify themselves as either Certified Health Physicists (CHP) or Diplomates of the American Board of Health Physics (DABHP). It should be recognized that the certificate awarded by the Board is not a license and, therefore, does not confer a legal qualification to practice health physics.

Professional Responsibilities of Certified Health Physicists

In achieving certification, the CHP recognizes and assumes the responsibilities due the profession of health physics. To uphold the professional integrity of health physics implied by certification, the relations of the CHP with other individuals and groups, including clients, colleagues, governmental agencies, and the general public, shall always be based upon and reflect the highest standards of professional ethics and integrity. Each CHP has a professional and ethical obligation to practice only in those areas in which he or she is competent. To maintain technical competence, the CHP has a commitment to remain professionally active in the field of health physics and knowledgeable of scientific, technical, and regulatory developments in the field.

General Requirements for Certification

1. **Academics:** As a minimum, the applicant must submit evidence (for example, official college transcripts or certified translations of official transcripts) of earning a bachelor's or graduate degree from an accredited college or university in physical science or engineering or in a biological science with a minimum of 20 semester hours in physical science.

Except for applicants for early admission to Part I (see below), applicants shall have satisfied and documented all requirements for degrees claimed by the time application is made for either part of the written examination.

Applicants for early admission to Part I who have not received their degree at the time of application, but who are scheduled to be granted their qualifying degree by 30 June, may sit for the exam by providing an official transcript showing current degree progress by the application deadline. However, an official transcript demonstrating that the qualifying degree was granted no later than 30 June of the year of the exam must be received by the Secretariat no later than 1 October. Should confirmatory transcripts not be received, the candidate's examination score will be voided and the candidate's exam fees will not be refunded.

2. **Experience.** An applicant must have at least six years of responsible professional experience in health physics as of 1 July of the year in which the examination is to be taken. At least three years of

the experience must have been in applied health physics. The six years of professional experience, which must be documented by an applicant for Part II of the exam, must be experience that demonstrates that the candidate has been required to exercise judgment in one, or more, of the following:

- establishment and/or evaluation of a radiation protection program
- design and/or the evaluation of the design of the radiation protection aspects of a facility
- design and implementation of a radiation protection training course or program
- development of an experimental and/or measurement program designed to answer questions related to radiation protection
- evaluation of measurement data
- analysis and solution of radiation protection problems
- preparation, interpretation and implementation of recommendations and regulations.

At the discretion of the Board, advanced degrees in health physics or a closely related area of study may be substituted for a maximum of two years of the required experience. A master's degree may be substituted for one year, while a doctoral degree may be substituted for two years of the required experience. Technician-level experience will in no case be acceptable as meeting the experience requirements.

Only military service in the commissioned officer and warrant officer grades will be accepted towards professional health physics experience.

An applicant may claim professional experience for an advanced degree and work experience for the same period. A maximum of one year of experience can be claimed for each calendar year.

It is incumbent upon the applicant to demonstrate that he/she has met the criteria for professional experience stated above. Professional experience is generally considered to be acquired after earning a qualifying degree. However, the Board recognizes there may be cases where individuals are working at a professional level prior to completing the requirements for a qualifying degree.

3. **References**. Reference statements are required from the applicant's supervisor and, if applying for Part II, from at least two other individuals who are professionally qualified to evaluate the applicant's ability in health physics. At least one of the references must be certified by the ABHP or, at the discretion of the Board Chair, a person certified by another certifying board.
4. **Written Report**. Each applicant for Part II of the examination shall submit with the Application for Certification a document written by the applicant that reflects a professional health physics effort. This "effort" may be a substantive facility evaluation, a protection guidance document, a major monitoring program, or some other complex or comprehensive effort. The criteria for ABHP acceptance of this report are that it (1) be on a topic for which the ABHP tests and certifies expertise, (2) contain elements of professional judgment or application of non-regulatory protection guidance, and (3) be written solely or principally by the candidate. The Board, after examination of the application materials, may request additional such reports. All reports will be treated as confidential material. All reports submitted in fulfillment of this requirement shall be reviewed by an ABHP member. Third-party review of written reports is not acceptable.
5. **Examination**. The written examination has two parts: Part I, which can be taken prior to fulfilling all the requirements for certification, determines the competence of the applicant in fundamental aspects of health physics, and Part II determines the applicant's competence in applied health physics topics. Either part of the written examination must be taken within two years of notification of eligibility, or a new application must be submitted. After passing Part I, the applicant must pass Part II within a period of seven years, or retake both parts.

Anyone who meets the education and experience requirements and is practicing health physics in a competent and ethical manner is strongly urged to apply to the Board for admission to the written examination. Although satisfactory performance on the written examination is not the only requirement for certification, persons who are admitted to and who perform well on the examination usually receive certification by the Board.

Early Admission to Part I of the Written Examination

The purpose of early admission to Part I of the written examination is twofold: (1) to give recent graduates an opportunity to demonstrate competence in the fundamentals of health physics at the beginning of their careers, and (2) to encourage younger health physicists to proceed toward certification.

Applicants are admitted to Part I of the written examination if they (1) have fulfilled the academic requirements for the master's degree in health physics or a closely related field by 30 June of the year in which the exam is to be taken, (2) have received a bachelor's degree in health physics by 15 January of the year in which the exam is to be taken and have one year of applied professional experience, or (3) have another acceptable bachelor's degree and two years of professional experience at the time of examination.

Part I of the examination is constructed to test the knowledge of the fundamental aspects of health physics that is expected of any candidate who meets the qualifications for early admission to Part I. Questions in Part I address fundamental knowledge associated with applied health physics. Academic preparation alone may not be adequate to answer these questions. However, the presence of these questions should not prevent a well-prepared candidate with no practical experience from successfully completing Part I of the Certification examination.

Application and Fees

Application for examination must be made on the prescribed forms, which are available from the Executive Secretary's Office [or from the ABHP website]. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they submit the current editions of applications, supervisor, and reference forms. Outdated forms will not be accepted.

To be eligible to sit for examination, candidates must submit an Application for Certification, original college transcripts, one Immediate Supervisor form, two Confidential Professional Reference forms, and a Radiation Protection Report and cover sheet.

Candidates applying for only Part I do not need to submit a written report and the two Confidential Professional Reference forms.

Complete applications must be filed with the Executive Secretary **postmarked no later than 15 January of the year in which the exam is to be taken**. Applications are valid for a two year period. Thereafter, a new application, along with reference and report forms, must be submitted. Signature stamps will not be accepted on application, reference, or report forms. Certification fees are as follows:

Each application to take a written examination (can include multiple exams on same date)		\$ 50.00
Examination Fee (for each exam part to be taken; due upon approval of application)	Part I Part II	\$150.00 \$200.00
Certification Fee		\$100.00
Annual Renewal Fee for CHPs		\$75.00

Fees are non-refundable and must be used within two years of submitting the fees.

NOTE: Re-examination fees following failure of the exam will be in accordance with the fee schedule in effect at the time reapplication is made.

Final Action of the Board

The final action of the Board is based on its evaluation of the total professional record of the applicant, i.e., education and experience, the achievements attained in health physics and related fields, maturity of judgment, the ethical nature of his or her professional conduct as indicated by associates and peers, and the written examination. Any applicant denied certification may appeal the action of the Board by contacting the Executive Secretary within six months of notification of results.

Examinations

Examinations are given once a year at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Health Physics Society. They are conducted at the location of the Society's meeting and may also be given at other selected locations if demand warrants. All approved candidates will be sent a site selection survey form in early April listing the tentative examination sites. Candidates should indicate their first and second choices of location and will be assigned to their first choice unless that site does not have enough candidates to warrant the examination being given at that location. All candidates will be notified of their definite exam site approximately 45 days prior to the examination date and will be given an admission slip to the examination room. No reference material may be brought into the room.

Re-Examinations and Postponements

A candidate who fails the first examination may be admitted to a second examination after paying the exam fee. If a candidate passes one part of the exam, the candidate must pass the other part within a period of seven years, or must reapply and retake both parts. The candidate must notify the Board of his or her intention to retake the examination and submit the proper fee no later than 15 January of the year in which the examination is to be taken. If a candidate fails either part of the examination for the second time, a new application must be filed.

If a candidate elects not to take any part of the examination in any given year, but subsequently elects to take the examination in any following year, the candidate must notify the Board of his or her intention to take the examination no later than 15 January of the year in which the examination is to be taken. Notification must be accompanied by the appropriate fee and, if required, a new application.

Revocation of Certificate

Certificates may be revoked for actions considered by the Board to be in violation of the statement “Professional Responsibilities of Certified Health Physicists.” Any person for whom such action is contemplated shall have the right of appearance before the Board.

Certification Renewal

A Certification Renewal Program is sponsored by the Board in an effort to ensure that CHPs are fulfilling their professional responsibilities and to encourage continued professional development. To remain on the list of active CHPs, diplomates must renew their certification every four years. The requirements for continued active certification are: (1) to be engaged substantially and currently in professional health physics practice; (2) to have earned during the preceding four-year period sufficient continuing education credits by participation in approved courses, meetings, and other activities; and (3) to have met such other requirements, including payment of fees or assessments, as may generally be imposed. The Continuing Education Committee of the AAHP reviews courses in advanced health physics and related subjects that are submitted to it by the course organizers, or by a CHP who attended the course, and determines the number of continuing education credits to be awarded to participants.

Changes in Requirements

Current requirements, procedures, and fees of the ABHP are described in this brochure. These are subject to change without notice; however, changes will be published before their effective date whenever practical. No changes will be retroactive.

Administration

The ABHP retains the services of an Executive Secretary who maintains the national ABHP office. The Executive Secretary performs administrative functions including normal correspondence, accounting, bookkeeping, financial reporting, recordkeeping, and application processing for examinations and Certification Renewals.

Current Officers, Board Members and Panel Members are listed on the website of the American Board of Health Physics. This site (www.aahp-abhp.org) includes application materials and additional information, including an examination preparation guide.

Future Examination Dates and Primary Locations

27 June 2011	Palm Beach, Florida
23 July 2012	Sacramento, California
8 July 2013	Madison, Wisconsin (tentative)

Revised November 2010