MEDICAL
WRITER
CERTIFIED

RECERTIFICATION HANDBOOK

For questions about recertification, contact
Medical Writing Certification Commission
American Medical Writers Association (AMWA)

240-238-0940

certification@amwa.org
www.amwa.org/mwc

MEDICAL WRITING CERTIFICATION COMMISSION

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Medical Writing Certification enhances a medical writer's professional credibility and shows a commitment to career and to the medical writing profession. Likewise, recertification demonstrates a certificant's dedication to continued education and professional growth in the field.

Maintaining Medical Writer Certified (MWC®) Status

To maintain MWC status, recertification is required every 5 years. The 5-year period begins on January 1 of the year after certification was granted and ends on December 31 five years later. For example, if certification is granted in June 2020, the 5-year period begins January 1, 2021, and the end of the cycle would be December 31, 2025. Applications for recertification are due by December 1 of the expiration year. Contact certification@amwa.org to receive the Recertification Application and links to pay the appropriate fee.

Recertification by Examination

Certificants may be recertified by obtaining at least 50 points from qualifying recertification activities or by examination. Certificants who recertify by examination are bound by the Medical Writing Certification Examination policies, procedures, and fees in place at the time of registration for the examination, which can be found in the *MWC Examination Applicant and Candidate Handbook* (www.amwa.org/mwc). To recertify by examination, a passing score on the Medical Writing Certification Examination must be achieved during the final calendar year of the 5-year cycle. For example, if an individual's certification expires in December 2020, the person must take and pass the exam no later than December 2020. See www.amwa.org/mwc for exam dates and registration deadlines.

Recertification by Qualifying Activities

Certificants who plan to recertify by qualifying activities may begin accruing points once they have taken the certification examination. Recertification activities must be related to the content outline (**Appendix 1**) of the Medical Writing Certification Examination. One hour of educational content will equal 1 point. Points will be calculated in 0.5 increments only, and hours will be rounded down to the next lowest 0.5 increment (eg, 1.75 hours equals 1.5 points). All activities submitted for recertification points must be verifiable by written documentation.

Certificant Responsibilities for Recertification

Credit from qualifying recertification activities will be determined according to the criteria outlined in the Table (p. 6), which are subject to change over time. Certificants are responsible for keeping track of their recertification activities and for maintaining all required documentation. The Recertification Tracking Spreadsheet (www.amwa.org/mwc) may be used to track points earned in each category. An example of a completed recertification spreadsheet is available on the certification website (www.amwa.org/mwc). Documents must be submitted with the application form as specified in the recertification application instructions, according to the categories and activities outlined in the Table (p. 6).

In addition, the certificant should

- review all qualifying activities to ensure that they occurred within the 5-year period before the recertification application. Qualifying activities cannot be carried over from one 5-year period to the next.
- keep a copy of the recertification application. Applications and supporting documents will not be returned.
- submit the completed recertification application, tracking spreadsheet, verification documents, and the recertification fee of $400 by December 1 of the year certification expires. All materials must be submitted to the Commission, as specified in the application instructions.

Qualifying Recertification Activity Categories

Qualifying recertification activities can be accrued in the following 4 categories of medical writing:

1. Continuing Education: minimum of 30 points required.
2. Presenting or Teaching: 20 points maximum.
3. Publishing: 20 points maximum.
4. Professional Memberships: 5 points maximum for all memberships in professional organizations related to medical writing or communication (1 point for each year of membership). A list of example professional organizations can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Note that only the Continuing Education category has a minimum point requirement. Applicants are not required to obtain points in the other categories.

Accepted Activities and Points

A certificant can earn recertification points by participating in qualifying activities, as described in the Table (p. 6). Recertification activities that qualify for points will show the certificant's commitment to continued professional development in medical writing or will contribute to the medical writing profession. In general, these activities will not be part of the certificant's regular job.

Each activity used to accrue recertification points must align with at least one domain in the Medical Writing Certification Examination content outline (**Appendix 1**), except for professional memberships, which must be in medical writing, medical communication, or a closely related field. Points can be earned in areas other than medical writing, providing the **content is specific to the examination content outline**. Published books and articles should be relevant for a medical writing audience. For example, an article about how to write a clinical trial would count toward recertification points; however, an article describing a specific clinical trial would not. If you are in doubt regarding whether an activity may qualify for recertification points, contact the Medical Writing Certification Commission at certification@amwa.org.

Application Process

To apply for recertification, certificants must

- contact certification@amwa.org to request the recertification application and link to pay the appropriate fee.
- complete the application form including background questions regarding any professional disciplinary proceedings.
- complete the tracking sheet, per the Table, marking each activity with the number and letter of the corresponding section of the Medical Writing Certification content outline.
- pay the required application fee
- submit the completed and signed application, tracking spreadsheet, and documentation supporting each activity (per the Table) to certification@awma.org.

Notification of Recertification Results

Certificants who have submitted recertification applications will receive notification of their results (recertified/not recertified) from the Medical Writing Certification Commission, typically within 45 days of the December 1 deadline.

Recertification Decision Appeals

Individuals may appeal the recertification decision. Appeals must include the reason for the appeal and supporting documentation. Appeals will be considered by the Ethics and Appeals Committee of the Commission and must be submitted via email within 30 days from the date of notification of recertification status.

Use of the Medical Writer Certified (MWC®) Credential

Those who are granted recertification (either by passing the examination or by an approved application documenting 50 points from qualifying recertification activities) can continue to use the credential Medical Writer Certified or MWC® after their name for a new 5-year cycle. MWC® is a registered certification mark. It is not to be punctuated with periods.

Misrepresentation of Certification

Inappropriate use of the credential will be referred for action to the Ethics and Appeals Committee of the Commission. An individual who continues to use the Medical Writer Certified (MWC®) credential after his or her certification expires and who does not recertify will be advised in writing by the Commission Chairperson of the seriousness of this offense and the legal ramifications of professional misrepresentation. If the individual persists, legal action may be taken.

Revocation of Certification

Certification may be revoked if the Commission deems it necessary. This may occur in situations such as the following:

- falsifying the application for recertification.
- falsifying any information requested by the Commission.
- violating the *Terms and Conditions of Certification* or the *Adapted AMWA Code of Ethics.*
- being convicted of a felony or other crime relating to the provision of medical writing services.

About the Medical Writing Certification Commission

The Medical Writing Certification Commission (MWCC) was established by the American Medical Writers Association (AWMA) to oversee a credentialing program for professional medical writers. The Commission provides equal opportunity to all applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, veteran status, or other legally protected categories.

To learn more about the Medical Writing Certification Program, visit the AMWA website at www.amwa.org/mwc.

Confidentiality and the Release of Certification Information

AMWA staff will verify certification status to members of the public on request, and an online directory will be accessible on the AMWA website.

Table. Criteria for Accruing Recertification Points

Activity	Points (accrued in 0.5 increments)	Supporting Documentation
Continuing Education Minimum 30 Points Required		
In-person educational activities (other than university courses, which are addressed below)	1 point per hour of education (in-house corporate [employer] training limited to 10 hours per 5-year cycle)	Certificate of attendance/completion or transcript. Documentation must also include • program title/description (detailed agenda or copy of program) • date of attendance or completion • duration (number of hours)
Online educational activities	1 point per hour of education	Certificate of completion or transcript. Documentation must also include • program title/description • date of completion • duration (number of hours)
University-level coursework	10 points per credit hour	College transcript showing • course name and description • credits earned • date of completion
AMWA self-study workbooks	3 points each, except for the Basic Grammar and Usage workbook (6 points)	AMWA curriculum history or certificate of completion Must pass the workbook quiz
Presenting or Teaching 20 Points Maximum		
Presenting educational content (other than a university-level course) in person or online	2 points per hour for the first time presenting the content 1 point per hour for repeated times presenting the same content	Copy of activity description that includes • activity name and description • duration (number of hours) • date of completion
Teaching a relevant university-level course	20 points for the first time teaching the content 10 points for repeated times teaching the same content	Copy of course listing that includes • course name and description • number of credits • date of completion

table continued on next page

Publishing (Medical Writing Audience) 20 Points Maximum		
Authoring a book	20 points If co-authored, 10 points	• A copy of the title page or other proof of contribution • Table of contents • Sample section
Authoring a book chapter	5 points If co-authored, 2.5 points	• A copy of the title page or other proof of contribution • Table of contents • A copy of the chapter
Authoring a peer-reviewed article published in a professional journal	3 points If co-authored, 1.5 points	• A copy of the article • Proof of contribution
Authoring an article published in a trade magazine or newsletter or on a website	1.5 points	• Copy of the article • Proof of contribution
Editing a periodical directed at medical writers	3 points	• Copy of the periodical • Proof of contribution
Peer review of an article for a professional journal or a book chapter	1 point (3 points maximum)	• Proof of contribution
Professional Membership **5 Points Maximum**		
Membership in a professional medical writing/communication organization (see Appendix 2 for example organizations)	1 point per year of membership	• Proof of membership

Appendix 1: Content Outline for the MWC Examination

This content outline is the basis for the Medical Writing Certification Examination and should be used to determine which educational activities can be used for recertification points.

1. Gathering (16% of content)

A. Determine purpose of document
B. Identify context for document
C. Identify target audience
   1) Assess needs
   2) Identify knowledge gaps
D. Select appropriate output type (eg, publications, regulatory documents, continuing medical education materials, patient education)
E. Identify appropriate outlet (eg, target journal, other print media, web)
f. Apply effective processes to gather information
   1) Conduct a literature search (eg, PubMed/MEDLINE)
   2) Elicit information from collaborators and stakeholders (eg, interview researchers, statisticians, clinicians, patients, regulators, thought leaders)
   3) Identify other relevant sources (eg, websites, databases, data outputs, clinical guidelines)
   4) Identify relevant writing guidelines, instructions, and ethical standards (eg, journal instructions for authors, grant application instructions, regulatory requirements)
   5) Identify relevant document models and templates
   6) Identify necessary forms and supporting materials (eg, permission to reprint, disclosures, copyright)

2. Evaluating (19% of content)

A. Evaluate collected information with regard to
   1) content (ie, quality and relevance, level of evidence)
   2) audience (ie, appropriate and relevant to needs)
   3) context (ie, credibility of sources and suitability for purpose)
B. Perform fact or data check
C. Identify inconsistencies in data or other content presented
D. Conduct critical review of a draft
   1) Assess quality of writing (eg, clarity, readability, usability, logic, organization, consistency)
   2) Provide constructive criticism
      a) Provide options for solutions
      b) Craft appropriate queries
   3) Evaluate representation and description of data
   4) Recognize ethical considerations with respect to self and others (eg, conflict of interest, disclosure, authorship, plagiarism, duplicate publications)
E. Evaluate for completeness, fair balance, and absence of bias
F. Determine appropriate levels of editing (eg, proofreading, microediting, macroediting)
G. Implement best approach to resolve issues (eg, author disagreements, scope change, unexpected delays)

3. Organizing (19% of content)

A. Determine correct organization of a document (eg, IMRAD)
B. Identify and prioritize key elements of content
C. Structure content to communicate message
D. Develop an outline
E. Apply templates and guidelines to documents (eg, CONSORT, ICMJE, FDA, ICH, PRISMA, ACCME, HIPAA, health literacy)
F. Determine structure of tables and figures to best communicate data
G. Determine which references to cite in a document
H. Comprehend processes of developing and disseminating documents (eg, news releases, publications, grant submissions, and regulatory submissions)
I. Design project work plan
   1) Determine deliverables
   2) Develop timeline
   3) Recognize roles, responsibilities, and processes
J. Track progress and status of project
K. Determine process for tracking changes and version control
L. Recognize and apply appropriate software and technology to use in developing a document

4. Interpreting (19% of content)

A. Comprehend relevant medical and scientific content
   1) Understand terminology
   2) Understand concepts (eg, cell and molecular level, organism level, and population level)
   3) Understand study design (eg, clinical trial, case control, longitudinal study)
   4) Understand statistical concepts (eg, *P* value, CI, power)
B. Interpret clinical and numerical data
C. Derive key messages
D. Determine inferences, implications, or clinical relevance
E. Synthesize and integrate information
F. Revise or repurpose existing content
G. Comprehend review processes (eg, peer review, grant review, regulatory review)
H. Respond to reviewers' comments
   1) Interpret feedback from reviewers
   2) Determine appropriate responses

5. Presenting (27% of content)

A. Present the message logically and coherently (ie, tell the story)
B. Retain the intended meaning of source materials or original document
C. Communicate scientific content appropriately
D. Communicate statistical content appropriately
E. Develop clear, concise prose
F. Write an abstract (eg, for presentation or publication) or executive summary
G. Tailor prose to the audience
H. Build logical and science-based arguments
I. Apply proper mechanics
   1) Apply rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation
   2) Apply proper word usage (general and medical), correct nomenclature, and nondiscriminatory language
   3) Construct effective sentences
   4) Construct effective paragraphs (eg, topic sentences, transitions, repetition of key terms)
   5) Apply techniques for cohesion between paragraphs and sections
J. Apply principles of proofreading
K. Apply basic principles of design and layout (eg, docu-ment, slide, poster, web)
L. Apply principles of visual presentation of data (eg, tables, figures)
M. Write document to adhere to standardized formats, guidelines, instructions, and ethical standards

Appendix 2: Example Professional Organizations

Listed below are examples of professional organizations that may be used to obtain recertification points in the Professional Membership category. Other organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- Alliance for Continuing Education in the Health Professions
- Association of Health Care Journalists
- Board of Editors in the Life Sciences
- Council of Science Editors
- Drug Information Association
- European Medical Writers Association
- International Society for Medical Publication Professionals
- National Association of Science Writers
- Regulatory Affairs Professional Society
- Society for Technical Communication