NFPA Certification Exams 101

What are NFPA's certification programs? And which one(s) are right for you?



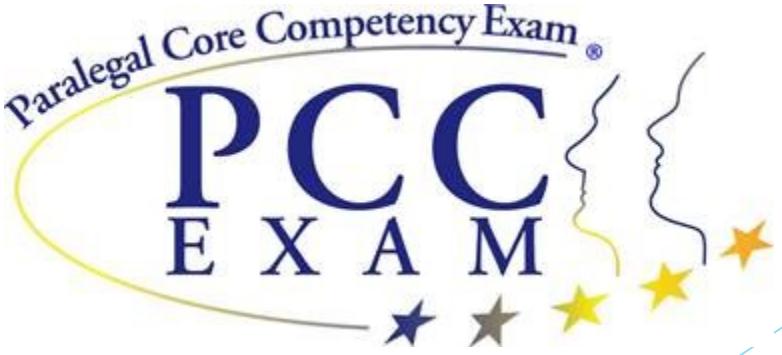


Becky Kerstetter | OSBA Certified Paralegal

Becky Kerstetter is an Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) Certified Paralegal at the law offices of Squire Sanders (US) LLP in Cleveland Ohio in the public finance and infrastructure department. She earned a B.A. in Paralegal Studies and Justice Studies from Kent State University. She is also the current President of the Cleveland Association of Paralegals, NFPA Secondary Representative and the NFPA PACE Ambassadors Coordinator and Strategic Planning Coordinator and serves on the Advisory Boards for Ursuline College's Legal Studies Program and Kent State University's Paralegal Program. Her expertise encompasses all types of public finance issues including working with bond counsel in both general obligation and revenue bond and note financings for Ohio school districts, municipalities and counties and also for underwriters' counsel for national and regional underwriters of tax-exempt bond issues by Ohio issuers.

What NFPA examinations are available to me?





Which certification is right for me?

- PACE
- PCCE
- Other certifications available?
  - NALA
  - NALS



Certificated, Certified, Credentials, Certification Program, Regulation and Licensing

- "Certificated" - An individual has completed a paralegal program, regardless of length or degree. This is different from being certified.
- "Certified" • If a paralegal has successfully passed a paralegal certification exam such as NFPA's PCCE® or PACE® and been awarded paralegal "credentials", such as the CRP ® or RP ®, they are "certified." This also means they must maintain their credentials and the credentials can be revoked by the issuing organization.
- "Certification Program" - An issuing organization confers credential which the paralegal would put after their name, such as Jane Doe, RP ® through a certification program offered by the organization. The certification program may have many different components which may include: experience and education requirements, completion of a predetermined number of CLE, character and fitness requirements and may or may not require an exam.
- "Regulation" - The laws and rules that provide government authority to regulate a profession usually by providing: definitions; standards of duty and care; education or experience requirements; license guidelines, processes and renewals; fee schedule, and consequences for not complying with same. There is no single authority in the United States which regulates the paralegal profession.
- "Licensing" - One way a governmental authority regulates certain professions is through licensing. Currently, there is no state that offers paralegal licensure.

Character and Fitness Requirements

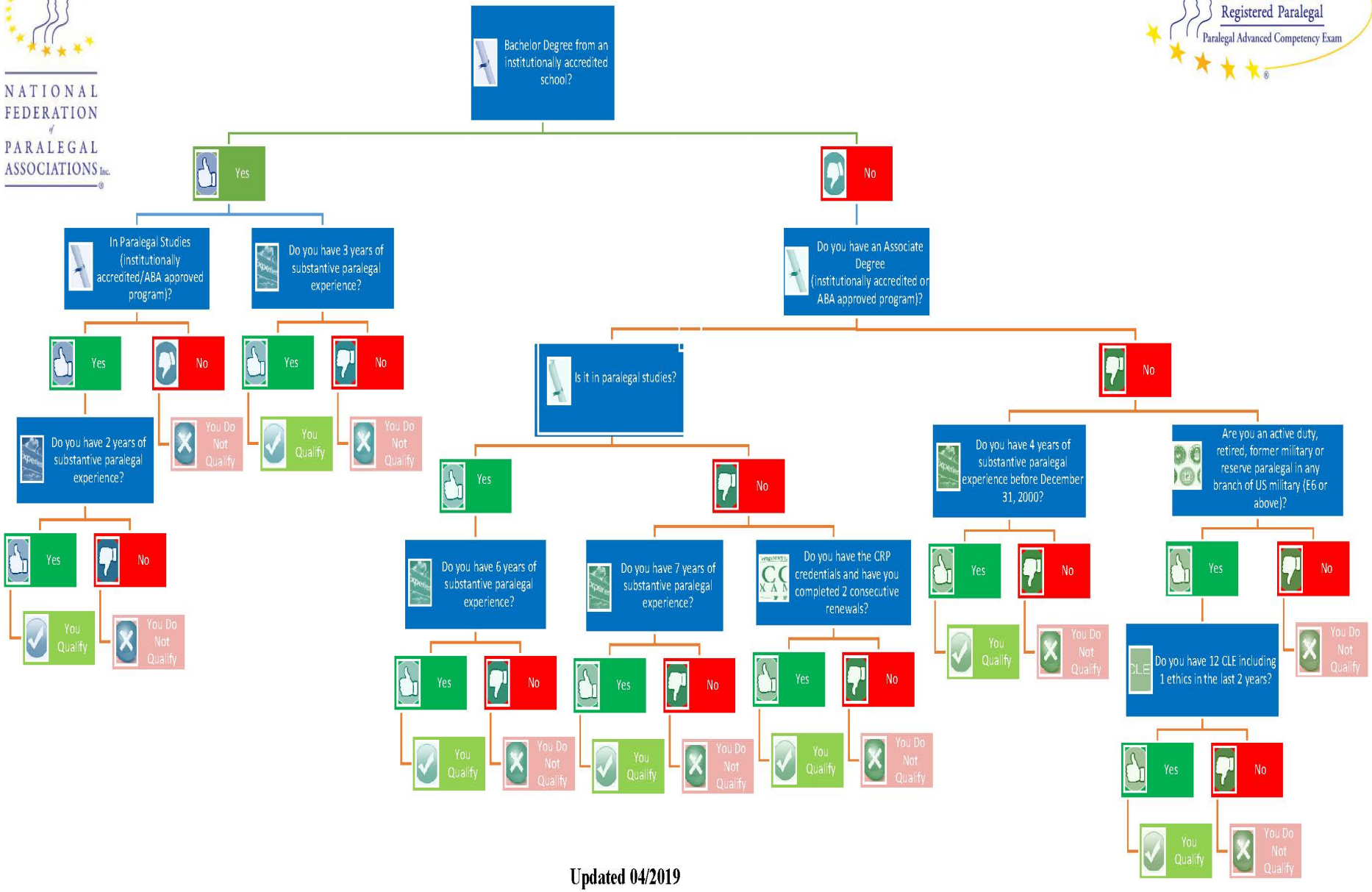
Applicants are not eligible for the following reasons:

- Conviction of a felony or comparable crime as defined by an individual state that does not have a felony designation; OR
- Currently under suspension, termination, or revocation of a certificate, registration, or license to practice by a professional organization, court, disciplinary board, or agency in any jurisdiction; OR
- Knowingly making a false statement or misrepresentation deemed material to the Application or Affidavit statement.

Also ineligible:

Individuals currently licensed to practice law or disbarred attorneys.

Are you Eligible to Take PACE®?



Updated 04/2019

- *A bachelor's degree and completion of a paralegal program with an institutionally accredited school or ABA-approved program and two (2) years substantive paralegal experience; OR*
- A bachelor's degree in any course of study obtained from an institutionally accredited school and three (3) years of substantive paralegal experience; OR
- *An associates degree in paralegal studies obtained from an institutionally accredited school, and/or ABA approved paralegal education program; and six (6) years substantive paralegal experience; OR*
- An associate's degree in any course of study obtained from an institutionally accredited school or ABA-approved program and at least 7 years of substantive paralegal experience; OR
- *An associate's degree in any course of study obtained from an institutionally accredited school or ABA-approved program, successful completion of the PCCE, and 2 consecutive renewals of the CRP credential; OR*
- A member of the active duty, retired, former military, or the reserve component of any branch of the US Armed Forces, qualified in a military operation specialty with the rank of at least an E6 in a paralegal rate as a Staff Sergeant (Army and Marines), Petty Officer First Class (Navy), Technical Sergeant (Air Force), or higher as a supervisory paralegal within that branch of service and 12 hours of continuing legal education ("CLE"), including 1 CLE hour of ethics, within 2 years preceding the Application; OR
- Four (4) years substantive paralegal experience on or before December 31, 2000.

Application Process PACE®

- Review PACE® Candidate Handbook – do your due diligence.
- Choose the eligibility pathway you will apply under and begin assembling your documents.
- Ensure that you have all of the required documentation before submitting an Application; fees are non-refundable.
- Go to the NFPA website, www.paralegals.org, create login credentials in Submittable platform and fill out PCCE Application.
- Pay the Exam Fee $325 Members/$350 Non-members.
- Select appropriate eligibility pathway (education or experience requirements), application status (first time or retake), attach completed ADA Test Accommodation Request Form (if needed) and sign the Certification Statement.
- Upload pdfs of the required documents (retain originals in case they are requested).

  Official transcripts and Diplomas (specific to the eligibility pathway selected), Notarized Affidavit of Work Education and Work Experience, Reference Letters/Employment Verification Letters on firm letterhead, Proof of Name Change, etc..
- CLE Certificates must state they are approved by one of the NFPA approved organizations (NFPA, NFPA-local associations, local bar association, NALA, etc.); AND include the date of completion that meets the stated requirement; AND provide the number of CLE hours awarded; AND state if they are general or ethics CLE. If the Certificate does not comply, they must be approved by the NFPA CLE Coordinator BEFORE submitting as part of an application.
- Note – degrees obtained outside of the US require applicant to have them evaluated against US degrees and a copy of the evaluation submitted as part of the application.
- If you are missing documentation, there is an additional $25 administration fee to open the application and allow more documents to be added. *Double check before you submit.

How is the updated PACE structured?

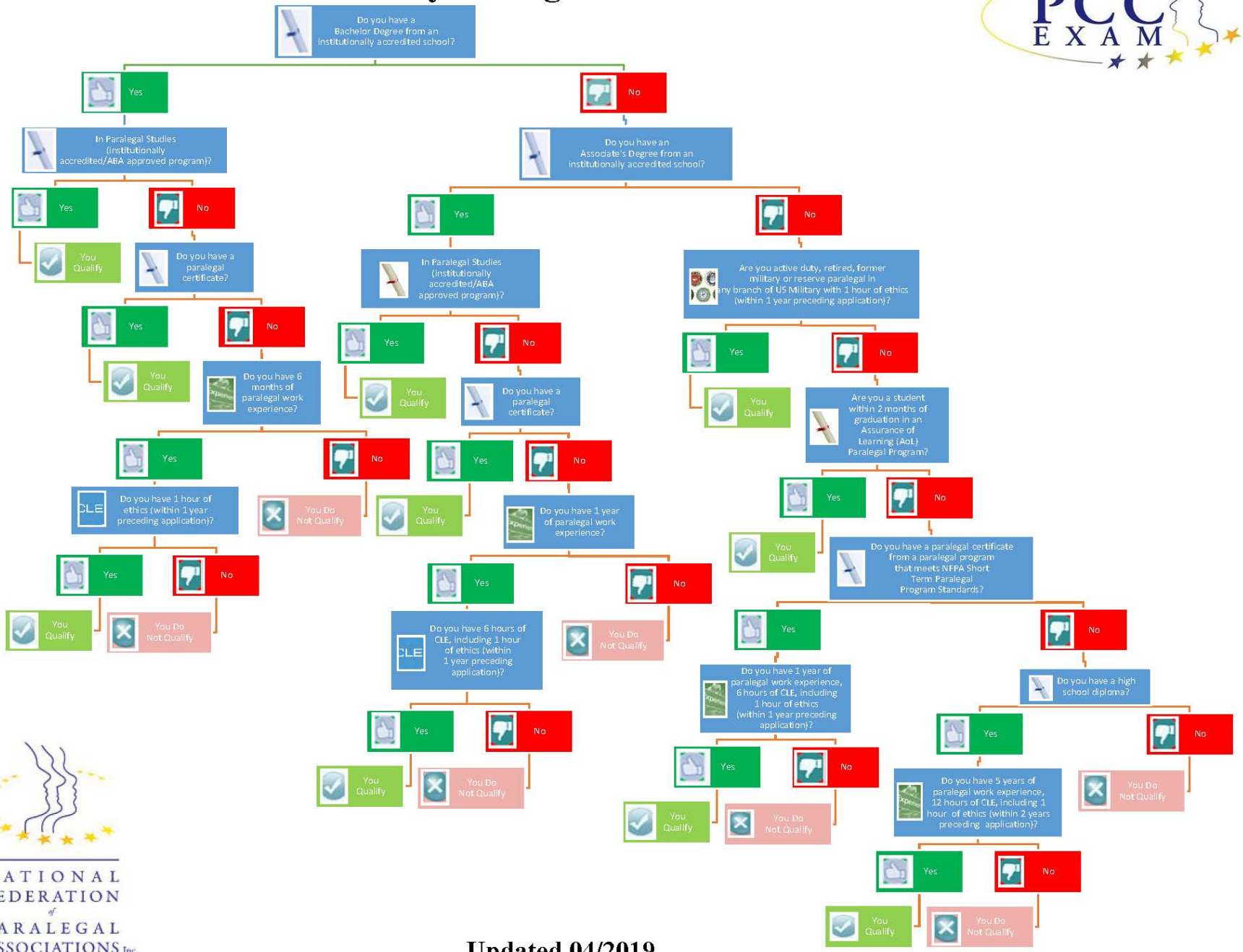
- This test focuses on critical thinking and problem solving skills used by experienced paralegals.
- Tests common law principals.
- Covers processes and procedures from a myriad of practice areas; but tests on federal law not state law.
- Tests ability to think big picture.
- The questions are hypothetical issues testing advanced application of general legal knowledge, paralegal experience, and the ability for critical analysis to identify the best answer.
- The exam covers tasks that experienced paralegals routinely perform, regardless of the practice area or geographic region in which they live.
- These tasks were organized into 4 domains (previously 5): Administration of Client Legal Matters (26 statements); Development of Client Legal Matters (29 statements); Factual Legal Research and Writing (32 statements), and Office Administration (18 statements). Ethics are included in all of the above domains, as are technology and terminology.
- See *PACE® Candidate Handbook* – Appendix B for complete breakdown of the Task Statements.
- The Recommended Study Material is the PACE Review Manual, 7th edition. See *PACE® Candidate Handbook* – Section 6 Study Reference Guides for a substantial list of additional study materials.

How is PACE structured?



- 200 multiple choice questions;
- Test questions are complex – some are straightforward but most are conceptual situational issues and involve problem solving;
- Question may be formed about one type of practice area, but it is really asking a general principal;
- Important to understand how questions are structured (a formula);
- Read through questions CAREFULLY and COMPLETELY.
- The exam was recently updated and in the BETA testing phase. This phase is expected to end at the end of June, 2019. The exam will then experience a black out phase where no applications will be accepted. New applications will be accepted for the updated exam beginning August 1, 2019.

Are you Eligible to Take PCCE®?



NATIONAL FEDERATION of PARALEGAL ASSOCIATIONS Inc.

Updated 04/2019

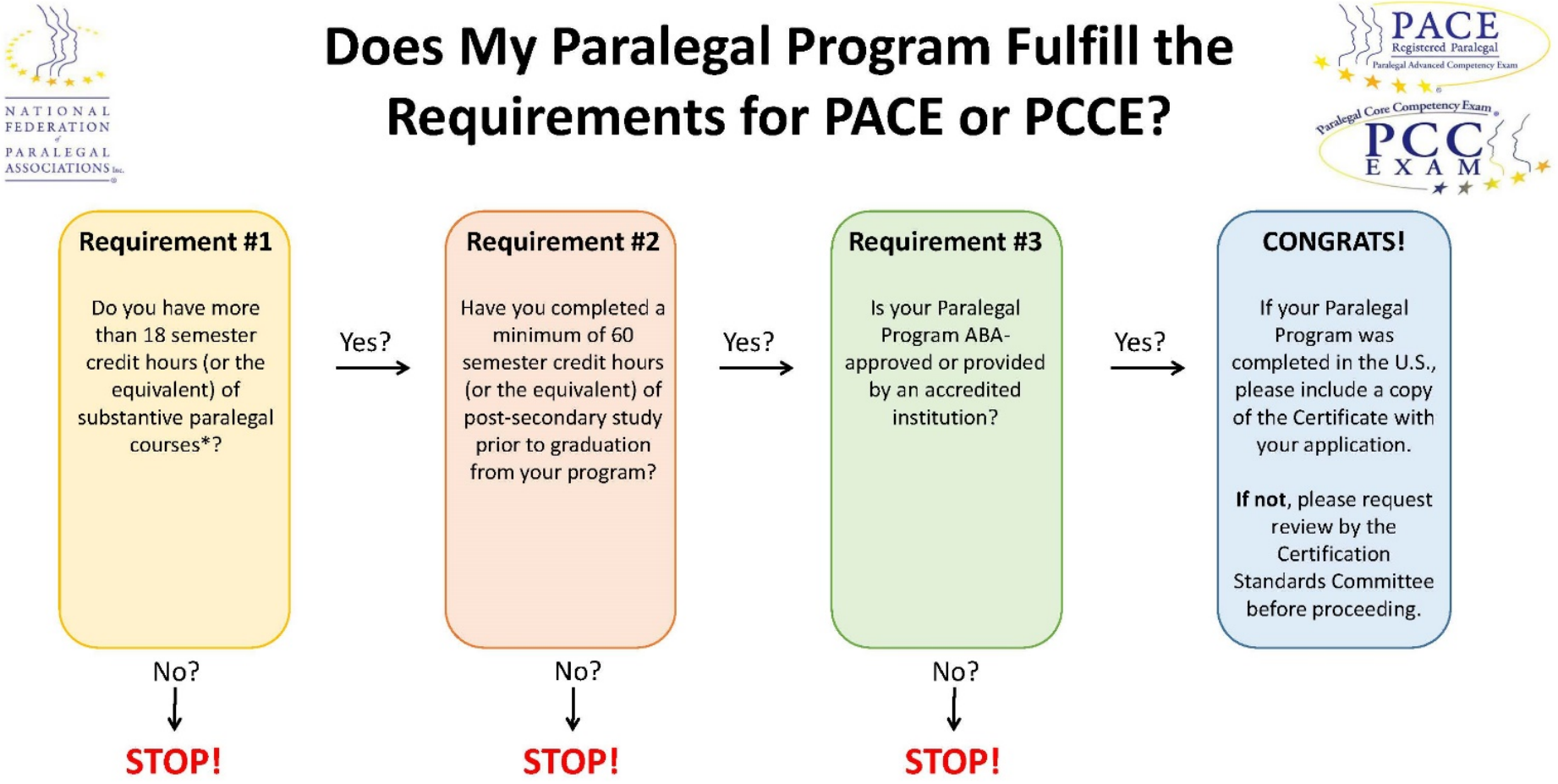
- A bachelor's degree in any subject, a paralegal certificate, no experience or continuing legal education (CLE); OR
- A bachelor's degree in paralegal studies, no experience or CLE; OR
- A bachelor's degree in any subject, no paralegal certificate, 6 months of experience and 1 hour of ethics taken in the year preceding the exam application date; OR
- An associate's degree in paralegal studies, no experience or CLE; OR
- An associate's degree in any subject, a paralegal certificate, no experience or CLE; OR
- An associate's degree in any subject, no paralegal certificate, 1 year of experience and 6 hours of CLE, including 1 hour of ethics taken in the year preceding the exam application date; OR
- Active duty, retired or former military personnel qualified in a military operation specialty as a paralegal and 1.0 hour of Ethics CLE within the year preceding the exam application; OR
- Candidates who are within two months of graduating and registered for the PCCE by a Director of a paralegal studies program participating in the PCCE Assurance of Learning (AoL) Program at the Partner level; OR
- A paralegal certificate from a program that meets or exceeds the requirements set forth in NFPA's Short Term Paralegal Program Position Statement , 1 year of experience and 6 hours of CLE, including 1 hour of ethics taken in the year preceding the exam application date; OR
- A high school diploma or GED, 5 years of experience and 12 hours of CLE, including 1 hour of ethics taken in the 2 years preceding the exam application date.

Application Process PCCE®

- Review PCCE® Candidate Handbook – do your due diligence.
- Choose the eligibility pathway you will apply under and begin assembling your documents.
- Ensure that you have all of the required documentation before submitting an Application; fees are non-refundable.
- Go to the NFPA website, www.paralegals.org, create login credentials in Submittable platform and fill out PCCE Application.
- Pay the Exam Fee $215 for members/$250 for non-members. *Be aware these fees increase to $300 for members/$325 non-members 01/01/20.
- Select appropriate eligibility pathway (education or experience requirements), application status (first time or retake), attach completed ADA Test Accommodation Request Form (if needed) and sign the Certification Statement.
- Upload pdfs of the required documents (retain originals in case they are requested).

  Official transcripts and Diplomas (specific to the eligibility pathway selected), Notarized Affidavit of Work Education and Work Experience, Reference Letters/Employment Verification Letters on firm letterhead, Proof of Name Change, etc..
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- Note – degrees obtained outside of the US require applicant to have them evaluated against US degrees and a copy of the evaluation submitted as part of the application.
- If you are missing documentation, there is an additional $25 administration fee to open the application and allow more documents to be added. *Double check before you submit.

Does My Paralegal Program Fulfill the Requirements for PACE or PCCE?



* defined as "post-secondary coursework in substantive and procedural law, the American legal system, law offices and related environments, the paralegal profession, legal research and writing, ethics and areas of legal practice."

What happens after you submit the Application?

- Once the completed application and ALL supporting documentation has been received, the qualifications will be checked, the documents reviewed and information verified. This series of events generally takes one to two weeks.
- If additional documents or information is requested, the applicant will be notified and they will need to pay the $25 administrative fee. Once received, the application will be opened for editing to allow the requested items to be uploaded. This will delay the review process.
- If approved, the applicant's information is entered into Prometric's system and when accepted by Prometric, a confirmation email will be sent to the candidate to the e-mail on file with instructions for scheduling the date/time and testing center location.
- Review this information carefully and print out a copy as your contact information must match your application and the identification you will use the day of the exam. If you find a mistake, you can go back into your application to correct errors.
- You will also receive an email Authorization to Test (ATT) within 24 hours from NFPA. If you do not receive the confirmation email, or Authorization to Test within two days of your application being approved, contact NFPA at 1-317-454-8312.
- The **applicant has 90 days from the date of the ATT confirmation to take exam**. The ATT confirmation also serves as the receipt.
- If not approved, the reasons for the denial will be listed on the Notice of Denial communication from NFPA, which will also include the Appeal Process.

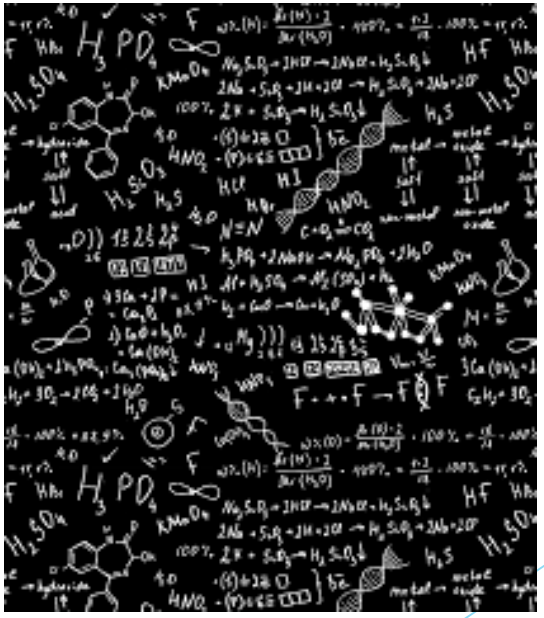
How is PCCE structured?



- 125 multiple choice questions.
- Broken into 2 Domains: Domain 01 - Paralegal Practice 52% of the test and Domain 02 - Substantive Areas of Law with the remaining 48%. Appendix A of the PCCE® Candidate Handbook covers both domains and the Task Statements for each domain;
- Tests knowledge of federal law;
- Know elements of different legal issues and terminology;
- Exam is scheduled for a full update in 2020, then refreshed each year with 35-30 new questions.

THE FORMULA

- **Each multiple choice question has only one (1) BEST answer;**
- **One distracter;**
- **Usually an obviously wrong answer;**
- **No “none of the above” or “all of the above” answers.**



When should I submit my application?

- No right answer – depends upon your situation.
- If finishing school, recommend testing within 3-4 months of graduation, while still in study mode.
- Experienced paralegals may need to “relearn” how to study and need to add time to the calendar to study.
- Must test within 90 days of Authorization to Test letter so only submit your application when you are ready to test. Extensions are rarely granted to the Authorization to Test time period.

Studying Options

- Get a copy of the Review Manual
- Study by yourself
- Study with a buddy
- Study in a group – in person or virtually
- Online review courses: Advanced Paralegal Institute (API) and the Paralegal Education Group (PEG)
- Apps for phone or tablet
- Legal Dictionary
- Bar Books
- Old paralegal text books
- Ethics Opinions
- Take the practice exams at beginning and towards the end of your study schedule to evaluate your progress
- A combination of the above

Prometric Testing Facilities

- Testing Centers' hours and locations vary by facility.
- Schedule time/location that is convenient for you using the using the Prometric testing site locator (Under "Select a Test Sponsor" choose "National Federation of Paralegal Association" from the drop-down list).
- Candidates may sit for the exam at over 200 Prometric testing sites across the United States, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.
- Active duty military and their spouses may test at international Prometric testing facilities.
- All exam appointments rescheduled or cancelled between 5 to 29 days before test date incur a $50 cancellation fee but will be able to reschedule exam.
- If cancelled less than 5 days or arrives late, entire exam fee is forfeit.

Prepping for Exam Day



THE DAY BEFORE THE EXAM

- Take the day before the exam off from work, if you can.
- Spend the day reviewing your material.
- Take the practice exams available on the NFPA website.
- Confirm route (and a ride) to testing center and allow for traffic and road construction. You do not want to arrive late and flustered on the day of the exam and may be too wiped out to drive after.
- Stop studying by 5 pm – you will either know it or you won't.
- Get a goodnight's rest.

Exam Day

RELAX, YOU ARE READY FOR THIS!

- Eat a good breakfast.
- Get there early to check in and use the restroom and get a drink of water.
- Bring valid ID – review the ID requirements provided in your confirmation email. The name on the ID must match the name on the application and confirmation email.
- You will only be allowed to take in your ID (put everything else in a secured locker).
- Ask for scratch paper and a pencil, if available.
- If others are testing in the facility, ask for earphones.
- Take a deep breath and TAKE THE EXAM.
- Read instructions carefully.
- Do the 15 min. tutorial/warm-up to become comfortable with the program.
- Mark difficult questions – you'll have an opportunity to come back to them.
- Keep moving, don't get stuck.
- Use all of the allotted time.
- Don't panic and remember to breathe!

Exam Day

WHEN YOU CLICK SUBMIT

- You will see a notice of completion page at the end of the exam.
- The electronic score report showing your official score will be available immediately after you complete the exam through the Prometric profile you created to schedule the exam, and will also be emailed to the email on file. If you can, go to locker and check your email to see if it is there before leaving the test facility.
- It is important to note that, official score notwithstanding, the RP® and CRP® credentials are not awarded until you receive notification from NFPA that the credentials have been released and you have been awarded the credentials.
- Exception for the PACE BETA Exam results, which will not be available until the end of the BETA phase, when a new cut score is designated and all BETA exams will be scored. Participants will be notified of the results at that time. Current expected date is end of June, 2018.

Exam Day



CELEBRATE

- Win, lose or draw – You've worked hard for this!
- Schedule a massage, go to dinner, have a drink, or meet with friends/family.
- Call, text or email the local Certification Ambassador and your study group after you've completed the test.
- Watch for the official results to be publicized by NFPA and your name to be added to the list of credentialed paralegals.

What if there are problems during the exam?



- If there are problems with the test format, alert the proctor on site as soon as possible. If they can correct it without interruption, complete the exam.
- If the problem persists and interrupts the exam process, the proctor will write a report and the candidate will be allowed to reschedule the exam.
- If there are other concerns with the test format or issues with the exam itself, please contact NFPA.

What if I don't Pass?



- If you don't pass the exam on the first attempt, regroup and re-evaluate.
- Pass rate is currently between 65-73%. Remember that not everyone passes the exam.
- Remember, if it was easy, everyone would do it.
- Review the domains that you didn't do well in. Is this a surprise?
- What didn't you know? Where do you need to refocus your study efforts?
- Contact your Certification Ambassador to get some additional support.
- DON'T GIVE UP! You've worked too hard for this.
- Put a plan in place to get ready to re-test.
- Remember there is a waiting period of 6 months to retest, but you can apply for a waiver after 4 weeks, with a limit of 3 attempts in a 2-year period (initial attempt plus 2 retakes).

Questions?



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