GUIDE FOR EVALUATING EXAM QUESTIONS

Revised – March 2014

This guide was prepared to assist subject matter experts (SME's) as they review and evaluate draft exam questions. If the certification program is to have credibility, it is vital that the exam questions adequately evaluate that the student has achieved the multiple learning objectives in each module.

In the development process, the SME will be given access to electronic files covering the following areas:

- The publically circulated Body of Knowledge documents (with leaning objectives) for each module covered in the exam, the Guide to Writing Exam Questions, and the Guide for Evaluating Exam Questions;
- A randomly selected subset of the questions in the draft exam bank, organized by examsection; and,
- Topic area summaries, by learning objective reference or by Handbook reference, to assess the coverage and balance of the questions in the exam bank.

Security Issues

Each SME is responsible for protecting the security and integrity of the materials provided to them, except for the Body of Knowledge which is a public document. The integrity of the exam should be of prime importance! More information on your responsibilities is provided in the Guide for Subject Matter Experts that was provided when you volunteered to participate.

Please protect these materials and keep them secure as you should for questions that you draft for inclusion in the exam bank. All questions remain the property of NCWM and may be copyrighted. Do not share them with others. Be particularly careful of printed versions but also be careful with electronic files.

The Review Process for Draft Questions

Each SME will be asked to complete an Excel evaluation form for the questions provided for each exam. The Certification Coordinator will be seeking feedback from SME's on each prospective question in the following areas:

1. Do you agree with the author's answer to the question (labeled Answer Key)? If not, describe how you would answer and explain your reasoning.

2. Is the question (including the potential answers) written as a question, with good English usage, free of grammatical errors, and free of spelling errors? If not, provide suggestions for changes.

3. Is the question written to limit itself to a single learning objective from the module? If not, describe the multiple issues you see and what in the question led you to see multiple issues.

4. Is the question written so it is clear, easily understood, and free from confusion and trickery? If not, describe what parts of the question you found confusing or tricky and provide suggestions for changes.

5. Is the question written to mirror the cognitive level of the learning objective in the Body of Knowledge, i.e. testing for knowledge, understanding, or application? If not, state at what cognitive level you believe the question is now written and provide suggestions for changes to rewrite it at the correct cognitive level.

   Note: Cognitive levels are discussed in the Curriculum Guide and the Guide to Writing Exam Questions. The action verbs used in the leaning objectives are used to set the cognitive level for the question.

6. Thinking of a professional at the minimum competency level, is the difficulty of this question inappropriate (too easy or too hard) for the exam under consideration? If so, explain your reasoning.

7. Optional, do you agree the question is matched to the correct learning objective number and/or Handbook reference? If not, please state what you think is the correct objective or reference. This is particularly important on short answer questions requiring citation to the Handbook section.

8. Do you have any other personal comments on the question, good or bad?

The Review Process for Exam Scope

The SME will be provided with the summary documents described above for each exam. Please note that these summaries refer to all questions in the exam bank and not solely those in the subset you were supplied. The objective is to ensure the questions in the exam represent a suitable balance within all of the learning objectives. Please refer to the Body of Knowledge document for each module as you review these documents.

One of the summaries is grouped on leaning objectives from the Body of Knowledge (BOK) and the other grouped on Handbook references. The first tallies the number of questions in each bank relative to each leaning objective from the body of knowledge. The second tallies the number of questions in each bank relative to each HB reference, particularly helpful when referring to HB 44. These are intended as aids to ensure the exams have balance and cover the entire scope of the learning objectives for the certification.

The summaries can be compared to the BOK to evaluate coverage and emphasis. To ensure coverage, it is important to ensure that most of the learning objectives are evaluated by at least one question in the exam bank. The goal is to identify those objectives that are not listed, i.e. holes in the exam, in the summary report. Similarly, the summary of Handbook references may identify critical paragraphs that are not evaluated by a question in the exam. Please report any missing objectives or references to the Certification Coordinator. In addition, please consider creating new draft questions to exam for those holes in the exam. Submit those to the Certification Coordinator as you would any draft question.

Evaluating emphasis is different and also a bit harder. The objective is to have an exam that covers all objectives but one that also emphasizes the more important objectives. In looking at the tally of questions for each learning objective or handbook reference, it is important to understand that the scope of a learning objective can also be broad or narrow. It may only take one question to assess competence on a narrow objective but a range of questions to assess competence on a broad objective.

The feedback that we are seeking from the SME is to assess balance within the exam relative to the scope of the learning objectives and the importance of the objective. We expect this will come in the form of, "We have too many questions on this leaning objective and/or too few on that learning objective."

Thanks again for your willingness to contribute. Please call or email the PDC Committee Chair listed on the NCWM website or Ross Andersen, the Certification Program Coordinator, at 518-869-7334 or at rjandersen12@gmail.com.