



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

OPNAVINST 1540.56A
N153
17 JUN 2011

OPNAV INSTRUCTION 1540.56A

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: NAVY CREDENTIALING PROGRAMS

Ref: (a) 10 U.S.C. §2015
(b) USD (P&R) memo of 16 Jul 2009, Payment of
Professional Expenses for Military Members (NOTAL)

Encl: (1) Definitions

1. Purpose. To implement policy authorized in references (a) and (b) and to assign roles and responsibilities for a Department of the Navy (DON) managed credentialing program. This discretionary program was developed for Navy active and reserve component military members, less Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). The program provides for the payment of credentialing expenses associated with professional licensing, certifications, renewals, and mandatory administrative fees.

2. Cancellation. OPNAVINST 1540.56.

3. Background. Reference (a) authorizes the Secretary of Defense to extend government funding for credentials to military members of the uniformed services. Reference (b) implements reference (a) and provides Department of Defense (DoD) policy and guidelines for payment of professional credentialing expenses incurred by military members. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs delegates authority to Chief of Naval Personnel to administer a program for payment of professional credential expenses for Navy military members. Definitions of terms are provided in enclosure (1).

4. Policy. Per references (a) and (b), Navy Sailors of the active and reserve components, less IRR, may be afforded the opportunity to obtain funding for credential examinations, renewals, maintenance fees, and other mandatory examination administrative fees; herein referred to as professional credentialing expenses. Requirements for officer eligibility

are addressed in this instruction; however, current funding only supports credentials for enlisted Sailors. Should additional funding be identified, it may be used to cover officer professional credentialing expenses as defined in this instruction. Payment of professional credentialing expenses will be authorized if the preponderance of the Service members' current or prior duties are covered by the credential, the credential is identified as Navy-funded by display of the "Navy bucks" (NAVY\$) icon on the Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) Web site, the member meets all eligibility criteria, and the credentialing vendors' certification requirements are met.

a. Eligibility

(1) Enlisted shall meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

(a) Be in the appropriate rating or occupation to which the credential is mapped.

(b) Be currently working in, or have been assigned to a position to which the credential is mapped.

(c) Have prior documented experience in a position to which the credential is mapped for credentials outside of their specific rating, and the credential has relevance or applicability to the current or future needs of the command or the Navy.

(2) Eligibility for Sailor credentials must be validated and approved by their commanding officer or command-designated approving official. Additionally, before authorizing the request, commands must also certify that Sailors:

(a) Have passed their most recent advancement exam.

(b) Have passed, or been medically waived from, their most recent physical fitness assessment.

(c) Have not received a judicial or courts martial punishment within the past 6 months.

(d) Have been recommended for promotion or advancement on their most recent performance evaluation.

b. Time of Service. Sailors shall have, at a minimum, 1 year remaining on their enlistment or military service obligation at the time they receive the certification for which they receive funding. Waivers will be considered by the Navy Education and Training Command (NETC), Navy Credentials Program Office (NETC N52) under the following circumstances for Sailors who:

(1) Are being discharged or released from service due to a combat-related injury.

(2) Have less than 1 year remaining in service, but have completed a minimum of 20 years Navy service. Member must be able to complete all certification requirements 60 calendar days prior to separation from Navy.

(3) Intend to reenlist or extend, but are awaiting execution of reenlistment or extension (i.e., pending service reenlistment bonus timeframes). Waiver package must include OPNAV 1500/57 Navy Credentialing Program Professional Certification and Licensing Voucher Request and a command endorsed and executed NAVPERS 1070/613 Administrative Remarks noting Sailor's intention to extend or reenlist.

(4) Should funding become available, officers shall also meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

(a) Hold the appropriate designator, be in the occupation, or be working in a position to which the credential is mapped.

(b) Currently work in, have orders to, or be assigned to a position in which a subspecialty code or additional qualification designator (AQD) has the credential mapped.

(c) Have prior documented experience in a position to which the credential is mapped for credentials outside of their specific designator, and the credential has relevance or applicability to the current or future needs of the command or the Navy.

c. Credentialing Vendors' Certification Requirement. Sailors applying for funding for professional credentialing expenses must comply with the certification agencies' and or certification exam vendors' certification requirements. In most cases, the Sailor must pass a written or practical exam as well as meet other requirements (i.e., provide documented experience, submit an application, provide documented training, maintain continuing education units, pay exam and or maintenance fees, etc.).

d. Funding. Sailors may receive funding associated with professional credentialing expenses, provided such funding is available and authorization is received from NETC N52 prior to registering for or incurring the professional credentialing expense. The following specific requirements apply:

(1) In all cases, OPNAV 1500/57 must be completed and submitted to NETC N52, and approval of the funding given prior to the Sailor registering for or incurring a professional credentialing expense.

(2) Funding for professional credentialing expenses will be in the form of pre-paid vouchers submitted by NETC N52 to the credentialing or exam agency. Reimbursement of professional credentialing expenses paid out-of-pocket by the member is not authorized.

(3) Should the credentialing agency not accept pre-paid vouchers, NETC N52 may authorize the Sailor to pay out-of-pocket. After completing the professional credentialing requirement for which funding was approved, an SF 1164 Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business must be submitted to NETC N52 in order for the member to receive reimbursement.

(4) Funding for recertification of previously earned credentials is authorized providing the Sailor maintains eligibility as described herein.

(5) Requests will be handled on a first come, first served basis.

(6) Funding is not authorized for payment of credentials that are:

(a) Solely a component of retention, recruitment, transition, or used to acquire an educational degree.

(b) A mandatory requirement to gain or hold a rating, job, position, designator, subspecialty coded billet, or AQD. In this case, funding is the responsibility of the resource sponsor mandating the credential.

(c) For academic degrees, training or study materials, or fees for non-mandatory membership in professional societies or associations.

(d) For a Sailor who previously received funding for professional certification expenses, failed the examination, and wants to receive funding for the same credential. However, the member may receive funding for renewal or maintenance of the certification if the member, subsequent to the failure, obtains the credential through other funding.

(7) The member (or member's command or organization) shall not register, take, participate in, schedule, or otherwise obligate the member or Government to pay for a credentialing expense without first obtaining approval for funding from NETC N52. Failure to obtain the advanced approval will result in the member's personal liability for the expense, without reimbursement from the Navy.

(8) Sailors may pursue credentials that are not identified as Navy-funded indicated by the NAVY\$ icon on the Navy COOL Web site at their own expense and or through the use of the Montgomery G.I. Bill (G.I. is "Government Issue"), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, or other approved programs.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

a. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (DCNO) for Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education (MPTE) (N1). DCNO MPTE Training and Education Division (N15), as the resource sponsor for the Navy Credentialing Program, shall:

(1) Develop credentialing policy that complies with governing directives and Federal law.

(2) Serve as principal advisor for all matters pertaining to the Navy Credentialing Program.

(3) Program resources for approved credentialing programs.

(4) Establish metrics to assess program effectiveness that include costs, level of effort, success rates, and production data.

b. Commander, NETC. NETC is the training agent for the Navy Credentialing Program and shall:

(1) Ensure compliance with this instruction and references (a) and (b).

(2) Execute program oversight.

(3) Advocate for resources required for the program during the Program Objectives Memorandum and Program Review process, and make recommendations for program restructuring in order to stay within fiscal resource constraints.

(4) Comply with reporting requirements established by higher authority.

(5) Publish guidelines and business rules for management and administration of the Navy Credentialing Program.

(6) Serve as the Navy's program manager for the Navy Credentialing Program.

(7) Maintain relationships with other military services and external credentialing organizations.

(8) Establish a lead program office to execute this program.

(9) Provide a forum for the exchange of information and discussion of issues related to credentialing programs.

(10) Ensure job-related credentials are identified for display within future competency models and career roadmaps.

(11) Analyze the potential to reduce initial and advanced skills training for individuals who successfully complete the examination and are subsequently awarded a license or certification.

(12) Review, approve, and provide oversight of a communications plan for the Navy Credentialing Program and the Navy COOL Web site.

c. NETC N52. As the Navy COOL Programming Office, NETC N52 shall:

(1) Ensure compliance with this instruction and references (a) and (b).

(2) Execute the program as required.

(3) Provide input towards reporting requirements established by higher authority.

(4) Assess program effectiveness that includes costs, level of effort, success rates, and production data metrics.

(5) Identify job-related credentials within future competency models and career roadmaps.

(6) Develop and execute the approved communications plan for the Navy Credentialing Program and the Navy COOL Web site.

d. Command Leadership Team. The command leadership team, consisting of the commanding officer, executive officer, and command master chief shall:

(1) Encourage Sailors to pursue professional credentials.

(2) Advise and counsel Sailors on the significance of professional credentials to job performance and career enhancement via career development boards, plan of the day or week notes, and command training.

(3) Ensure command-designated approving officials are E7 or above and are familiar with the Navy Credentialing Program, Navy COOL Web site, and this instruction.

(4) Validate Sailors' OPNAV 1500/57 to ensure completeness and accuracy, and that members meet Navy eligibility and are eligible and ready to sit for the credentialing exam (paragraphs 4a and 4b).

(5) Validate satisfactory completion of credential requirements and ensure credential completion is recorded in the Sailor's electronic training jacket (ETJ), Sailor and Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), and electronic service record.

(6) Ensure command career counselors promote and support the Navy Credentialing Program and the Navy COOL Web site.

(7) Ensure Sailors requesting credentialing exam funding under this authority do not register, take, participate in, schedule, or otherwise obligate the member or Government to pay for a credentialing expense without first obtaining approval for funding from NETC N52.

e. Sailor. The Sailor shall:

(1) Submit OPNAV 1500/57, containing all required information and endorsements, and receive approval for funding before taking any action that would obligate the expenditure of funds, to include registering for, scheduling or partaking in an exam, or other credentialing expense.

(2) Notify NETC N52 of any changes in taking the credentialing exam within the timeline approved and accepted by the member (normally 60 calendar days from when credential is funded).

(3) Notify NETC N52 if member does not enroll in or is unable to complete the Navy-funded credentialing exam with a minimum of 1 year remaining on service obligation. The member is required to return any voucher that is not used within the required minimum remaining service obligation, unless waived per paragraph 4b).

(4) Provide correspondence (written or email) from the member's commanding officer confirming withdrawal for military or emergency reasons.

(5) Provide pass and fail results within 30 calendar days of notification of exam results from the credentialing agency.

(6) Provide certification document (or certified true copy) to servicing Personnel Support Detachment and Navy College Office to ensure attained credentials are entered into the member's service record, SMART, and or ETJ.

6. Records Management. Records created by this instruction, regardless of media and format, will be managed per Secretary of the Navy Manual 5210.1 of November 2007.

7. Forms

a. OPNAV 1500/57 Navy Credentialing Program Professional Certification and Licensing Voucher Request is available for download via Naval Forms Online at <https://navalforms.daps.dla.mil/web/public/home> and via the COOL Website at <https://www.cool.navy.mil/>.

b. SF 1164 Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business is available for download via the General Services Administration Web site at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/forms/type/SF> and at the "Costs & Resources" page via the COOL Website, <https://www.cool.navy.mil>.

8. Reports Control. OPNAV Report Control Symbol 1500-30 has been assigned to the reporting requirements contained in OPNAV 1500/57.



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DEFINITIONS

1. Additional Qualification Designator (AQD). Identifies officer billet requirements and officer occupational experience acquired through billet experience or through a combination of education and experience.
2. Certifications. Recognition given to individuals who have met predetermined criteria set by an agency of Government, industry, or profession. Certifications differ from certificate programs in that certifications include an experience and competency component.
3. Credentials. General term encompassing certifications, qualifications, licenses, and apprenticeships.
4. Command-Designated Approving Official. Primarily an E7 or above who has been formally designated by the commanding officer to review and approve OPNAV 1500/57.
5. Designator. The officer designator codes are four-digit numbers used to group officers by categories for personnel accounting and administrative purposes and to identify the status of officers.
6. Full Time Support. Reservists on full-time active duty to provide full-time support to the Navy Reserve.
7. Licenses. Process by which a Governmental agency (Federal, State, or local) grants permission to an individual to engage in a given occupation upon finding the applicant has attained the minimal degree of competency required to engage in this occupation.
8. Job. Occupation which is part of a Navy rating (e.g., aviation boatswain's mate (equipment), electrician's mate, religious programs specialist, sonar technician, etc.) or a standard occupation within Navy (e.g., drug and alcohol program advisor, sexual assault prevention and response, senior enlisted advisor, etc.).

9. Mandatory Credentials. Commercial certifications, licenses, or Department of Labor apprenticeships which are required for Navy retention, position, or advancement. Mandatory credentials are implemented or addressed within DoD or DON policy documents (i.e., DoD Directive 8570.01 of 15 August 2004 mandates commercial certifications for DoD's information assurance workforce).

10. Mandatory Administrative Fees. Fees that are a mandatory requirement to apply, hold, or maintain a voluntary credential (i.e., attorney bar fees, examination application fees, and credential maintenance fees).

11. Navy Officer Billet Classification. Identifies a group of officer billets that are similar but not necessarily identical in scope and nature of duties.

12. Occupation. Work that is not enlisted rating-centric or officer designator-centric (i.e., collateral duties, leadership positions, out-of-rate duties, and duties for which multiple officer designators may be afforded to work in).

13. Professional Credentialing Expenses. Expenses include the credentialing examination, renewals, maintenance fees, and other mandatory examination administrative fees.

14. Selected Reserve (SELRES). The SELRES is a part of the Ready Reserve, is the Navy's primary source of immediate mobilization manpower, and is comprised of those members who are required to participate in at least 48 scheduled drills or training periods each year and to serve on active duty for training of not less than 14 days each year or serve on active duty for 30 days during each year.

15. Position. An arrangement of duties assigned or delegated by responsible authority, requiring the full-time or part-time employment of one person.

16. Rating. Ratings are broad enlisted career fields (e.g., information systems technician, aviation ordnanceman, boatswain's mate, etc.) identifying occupational specialties which encompass related aptitude, training, experiences, knowledge, and skills.

17. Sailor and Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART). The official location for Sailors to update their academic degrees.

18. Sub-Specialty Code. Identifies officer specialization (specialty) required in a billet and is identified by a code. These codes define the field of application and additional education, experience, and training qualifications needed to satisfy special requirements.