



AFC®
Candidate Handbook

2025

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Introduction

AFCPE supports researchers, educators, and counselors by establishing and upholding certification standards for professionals impacting the lives of consumers through financial counseling and planning education. Financial counseling and planning education is the integrative, multidisciplinary field of social science that studies personal finance and helps families from all walks of life make effective financial decisions.

The AFC® (Accredited Financial Counselor®) designation demonstrates to colleagues, clients, employers, and the public that certified individuals have the knowledge and proficiency required of the financial counseling professional. Professionals earn this distinction through education, experience, ethics and by meeting the highest standards of social science and practice of professional financial counselors validated by their performance through examination.

Development and maintenance of the AFC examination is based on a job/practice analysis study process that is designed to ascertain, directly from practicing professionals, the frequency with which knowledge and skills are applied in practice, and the importance or criticality of required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The Certification Council is responsible for crucial decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the certification programs.

Mission

To positively impact financial well-being for ALL people by ensuring the highest standards for financial counseling, coaching, and education.

Established in 2013 as an independent and autonomous unit of the AFCPE, the Certification Council promotes the highest standards of the financial counseling and planning education profession through the development, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of all aspects of the certification and certification renewal processes.

Vision

AFCPE envisions a future where all people - regardless of income or background – have equitable access to high quality financial counseling, coaching, and education.

The Accredited Financial Counselor® designation is a specialty credential targeted to professionals interested in expanding accessibility to, and improving equitability in, financial counseling and education. The AFC® helps professionals better understand how diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences impact individuals' money behavior. An Accredited Financial Counselor has the skills to assist individuals and families in the complex process of financial decision making, including the ability to:

- Educate clients in sound financial principles.
- Assist clients in the process of overcoming their financial indebtedness.
- Help clients identify and modify ineffective money management behaviors.
- Guide clients in developing successful strategies to achieve their financial goals.
- Support clients as they work through their financial challenges and opportunities.
- Help clients develop a new perspective on the dynamics of money in relation to family, friends and personal self-esteem.

“The certification process announces to clients that I have achieved a certain level of competence and that an independent body of professionals has found my abilities to meet the standards.”

The AFC® designation equips the individual to work with clients in a financial counseling or education setting to assess and improve their financial decision making. AFC certified professionals work across the United States and on military bases around the world as researchers, educators, University Extension staff, private practitioners, and military financial counselors. They work in financial planning firms, law firms, credit and debt repayment agencies, banks and credit unions, government agencies, and many other organizations committed to improving the financial capability of individuals and families.

Section 1: How to Apply for Certification

Eligibility

AFCPE's core values include expanding financial counseling accessibility to all. In that spirit, the AFC education pathway options recognize that individuals enter the financial counseling field from a variety of education and experience backgrounds. The AFCPE Certification Council determined that all candidates for certification, regardless of the education pathway they choose, should have a basis of financial counseling knowledge as defined by the AFC core competencies. The education pathway options recognize the diversity of the financial counseling field and enable individuals to apply previously-gained knowledge, education, and experiences toward their AFC certification goals. Requiring education, rather than qualification by work experience only, ensures that all applicants are exposed to the broad range of knowledge and tools needed to successfully perform in a wide range of financial counseling job settings and meet diverse client needs. Participating in training tied to all of the core competencies, regardless of the source, ensures that applicants have received education related to a wide range of financial counseling methods.

The Certification Council has developed requirements for eligibility to ensure that the application process is fair and impartial for all applicants. Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by AFCPE have an acceptable level of education, knowledge, and proficiency necessary to provide financial counseling services as an AFC.

AFCPE Membership is not a requirement for certification.

AFC Eligibility Requirements

Meet any **ONE** of the following educational requirement pathways:

- 1. Financial Education Challenge** - Complete or teach applicable course work in Personal Finance, Financial Planning, Financial Counseling, Consumer Sciences, or equivalent curriculum* from a regionally-accredited college or university in the United States during the past seven (7) years.

The financial education challenge pathway provides applicants who have completed or taught college-level coursework that encompasses each of the AFC core competencies to apply that coursework toward AFC eligibility. Applicants are required to map the completed coursework to the core competencies, ensuring the candidate has completed education or taught coursework in each AFC core competency.

Applicants will submit a registration form documenting coursework from a regionally accredited college or university in personal finance, financial planning, financial counseling, consumer sciences or another comparable discipline including which course(s) specifically meet each outlined competency, and:

If the course was taken as a student:

- Transcript (official or unofficial) required showing completion of coursework with a passing grade.

If the course was taught as a professor:

- Syllabus detailing course content
- Experience Verification Form signed by Department Chair validating claim

AFCPE will review the provided documentation and process the application within 30 business days. If provided documentation indicates that the educational requirement has been fulfilled, AFCPE will send written notification, including instructions for either scheduling the AFCPE examination or completing additional educational requirements, to the candidate via email.

University/college coursework must be no older than 7 years to qualify for the Financial Education Challenge.

- i. Individuals who completed their degree/coursework more than 7 years prior to AFC application will still qualify under this option if they have been employed full-time in the financial counseling or financial education field for at least 4 of the last 7 years, or employed part-time in the financial counseling or financial education field for at least 5 of the last 7 years (validated through an [Experience Verification Form](#)).
- ii. A transcript showing completion of coursework that corresponds to the AFC core competencies must be submitted electronically with initial registration for the AFC certification program.
- iii. *AFCPE recognizes that different schools use different terminology. An equivalent degree is defined as a degree in the financial field with coursework that corresponds to all the AFC core competencies. For any coursework that does not fall under the above titles, applicants will be asked to provide specifics on coursework completed including competencies they believe have been satisfied.

2. Professional Designation Challenge

The professional designation challenge pathway provides applicants who have achieved a professional designation in a related field to apply the knowledge assessed by that designation towards the required AFC® core competencies. In order to ensure each of the core competencies has been addressed, AFCPE has mapped each designation to the core competencies. To address any core competencies not encompassed by the professional designation, applicants can either complete college coursework or purchase self-study materials to attain knowledge of the remaining core competencies.

Candidates that hold the CFP[®], CPA, ChFC or CFA certification may submit documentation of a recognized credential. The credential must be in good standing. These marks will fulfill the educational requirement for the personal finance competencies of the AFC[®]. AFCPE will review the application and confirm with the certifying body that the designation is held in good standing. Additional competencies satisfied by upper-division coursework through a regionally accredited college or university will be required to be documented via transcript.

Certified Financial Planner (CFP), Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC), or Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) professionals must provide verification that the professional certification is current and in good standing **AND** complete either:

- i. Verify completion of applicable course work (corresponding to the remaining competencies not met by the professional designation in Financial Counseling, Consumer Sciences, or comparable curriculum* from a regionally accredited college or university in the United States by submitting transcript electronically, or
- ii. Enroll in the AFCPE Financial Counseling and Debt Management self-study module[†]. Practitioners may use the self-study materials in one (or more) of two methods that best meets the needs of the individual's learning style: online learning system, onsite review, or instructor led review.

3. Self-Paced Study

The self-paced study pathway requires use of materials specifically selected to cover each of the AFC[®] core competencies. The self-paced study pathway enables applicants who have not attained a wide range of financial counseling knowledge from other sources (i.e. college coursework, professional certification) to obtain a broad knowledge base for financial counseling practice that incorporates each of the AFC[®] core competencies. This pathway ensures there is expanded access to certification for those for whom college coursework or professional certification is less accessible. Practitioners may use the self-paced study materials in one (or more) of two methods that best meets the needs of the individual's learning style: books, or webinar review.

4. Registered Education Program

The registered education program pathway allows applicants to apply knowledge gained from a program that has pre-submitted its course content to AFCPE. AFCPE has reviewed the course content against the AFC[®] core competencies to determine that each competency is satisfied. Candidates may satisfy the educational requirement for the AFC[®] by completing coursework through an AFCPE[®] Registered Education Program. Options are available for both students and professionals.

Note: Each AFCPE® Registered Education Program has their own tuition and fees that are assessed independent of the AFC® Certification program.

Candidates will submit a registration form, along with documentation confirming completion of the pre-submitted coursework. A passing grade in each related course is required. Registration with AFCPE must be done either while enrolled as a student or within 7-years of completion of coursework from the registered university.

A complete list of registered programs and faculty contact information is available on the program website.

An Alumni from an AFCPE Registered Education Program who did not enroll in the AFC® program within 7 years of coursework completion may register through the Education Challenge Pathway.

i. Non-degree seeking

This pathway is designed for adult learners who are seeking a traditional learning experience through a college or university but are not seeking a degree. Coursework is completed online. AFCPE has reviewed the course content against the AFC core competencies to determine that each competency is satisfied.

Candidates are required to submit confirmation of completion of a registered program with a passing grade. Requires completion of two (2) courses.

Each AFCPE® Registered Education Program has their own tuition and fees that are assessed independent of the AFC® Certification program.

Upon completion of the course, candidates must register with AFCPE® under the AFCPE® Registered Education Program to confirm completion of education requirements and to complete the exam, experience, and ethics requirements.

ii. Degree seeking

This pathway is designed for students seeking a degree and allows applicants to apply knowledge gained in an accredited university's relevant coursework at one of the university program providers registered with AFCPE that has pre-submitted its course content to AFCPE. AFCPE has reviewed the course content against the AFC core competencies to determine that each competency is satisfied.

Candidates are required to submit confirmation of completion of applicable coursework with a passing grade at a registered education program.

Each AFCPE® Registered Education Program has their own tuition and fees that are assessed independent of the AFC® Certification program.

Upon completion of the course, candidates must register with AFCPE® under the AFCPE® Registered Education Program to confirm completion of education requirements and to complete the exam, experience, and ethics requirements.

Registered Education Programs have met the following guidelines established by AFCPE:

- Programs must be, or affiliated with, a post-secondary institution accredited by one of the six (6) regional accrediting agencies recognized by the Department of Education.
- Coursework must cover subject areas corresponding to the core competencies required to sit for the AFC certification exam (a minimum of 6 credit hours is required to satisfy this requirement).
- Coursework must cover subject areas that correspond to the core competencies required to sit for the AFC certification exam.
- The required curriculum should be within a program that supports development in personal finance, debt management, and counseling skills through additional coursework or other educational or experiential opportunities.
- The program supervisor must be an AFC professional in good standing, or must have a graduate degree in financial planning, financial counseling, or another relevant degree.

5. Independent Training

The independent training pathway provides an opportunity for applicants to complete a training program developed and delivered by an independent trainer that holds AFC® certification. This pathway provides access to education related to the core competencies in a personalized learning environment. By meeting the requirement to be AFC® certified in good standing for two (2) years, the trainer has demonstrated working knowledge of the core competencies required for proficiency as an AFC® practitioner.

Note: Each AFC® Independent Trainer has their own tuition and fees that are assessed independent of the AFC® Certification program.

A complete list of independent trainers is available on the program website.

** **Note Regarding Education Options:** Training provided by AFCPE is optional and is not a requirement for AFC® certification. Individuals applying under the Financial Education Challenge, Professional Designation Challenge, Registered Education Program, and Independent Training pathways are not required to complete AFCPE provided or approved education. Each education pathway is designed to*

ensure that applicants have been exposed to education that corresponds with each of the core competencies on the AFC® examination.

The AFCPE Certification Council does not develop, approve, recommend, or endorse any educational programs, study programs, or other offerings. AFCPE courses are developed and delivered by the AFCPE independent of the Certification Council with no access to confidential AFC® examination content. All applicants are encouraged to choose the educational pathway best suited to their educational background and professional experience.

AFC Certification Requirements

- Pass the AFC® examination.
- Obtain 1,000 experience hours and submit a verification form. Experience may be accrued 7 years prior to enrollment and throughout the 3-year program. The experience requirement can be met before or after the candidate completes the exam requirement. Applicable experience includes:
 - Financial counseling, coaching, and education
 - Personal financial planning and tax preparation
 - Developing curriculum, presentation or other financial education materials
 - Managing financial counselors/programs
 - Training, webinars, and coursework
- Complete the AFC final certification documentation. Final certification documentation includes:
 - Completion of professional information form documenting work experience
 - Submission of the employment verification form to be signed by the applicant's supervisor or, if self-employed, by an individual knowledgeable about the applicant's practice

Timeframe for Completion

All requirements for certification must be completed and submitted for review by deadline:

Educational Requirement Pathway	Deadline
Financial Education	3 years from date of registration approval
Professional Designation	3 years from date of registration approval
Self-Paced Study	3 years from date of registration approval
AFCPE Registered Education Program	3 years from date of registration approval
Independent Trainer	3 years from date of registration approval

One six-month extension is available with payment of an extension fee. To request an extension, please complete the Certification Extension Request Form available at my.afcpe.org. AFCPE will notify you about the status of your extension request within 3 business days of receipt. If approved, an extension of six months from your original deadline will be granted. All program requirements must be met within the six-month extension period or re-enrollment in the program will be necessary. No further extensions will be considered or granted.

Eligibility Appeals / Denial

A candidate whose eligibility has been denied may appeal the decision.

Appeals regarding certification examination eligibility must be submitted in writing to the Director of Certification at mstarkey@afcpe.org within thirty (30) calendar days after the adverse decision or notification. The candidate must submit the appeal in writing, and explain in detail: 1) The nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request, and 2) all reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents. The Director of Certification will review the appeal within fifteen (15) business days. If the issue can be resolved at the staff level, the Director of Certification will make a determination and will notify the Certification Council of the result.

If the issue cannot be resolved by the Director of Certification, he/she will refer the appeal to the Certification Council. The appeal will also be referred to the Certification Council if the candidate does not accept a determination by the Director of Certification.

The Certification Council will review the appeal within thirty (30) days and will make a determination within sixty (60) days. The decision of the Certification Council is final.

Enrollment Requirements

Taking the certification examination is voluntary. AFCPE strictly adheres to the eligibility requirements for certification.

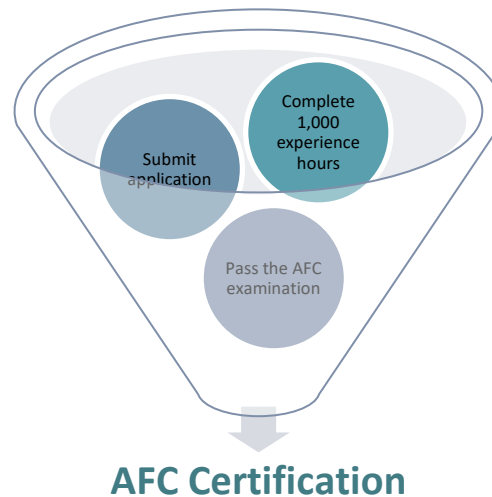
It is the responsibility of the applicant to comply with all procedures and deadlines to establish eligibility to take the examinations.

How to Enroll

To enroll for certification, submit the enrollment form online at www.my.afcpe.org. Incomplete or illegible applications may not be processed.

Candidates will receive confirmation that their enrollment has been processed, along with other critical communications, via email, therefore, it is vital to ensure that the correct email address is included on the form.

Candidates are eligible to request the first attempt at the examination in any order and at any time after application. Exam should first be requested by submitting the exam fee from the user's myAFCPE dashboard at my.afcpe.org. It is recommended that candidates submit the exam fee at least 14 days prior to the preferred exam date. AFCPE will verify candidates' eligibility to test and notify PSI of such eligibility immediately upon receipt of the exam fee. PSI will contact the candidate via email with instructions for scheduling the exam. The instructions will be also available on the candidate's portal at my.afcpe.org.



Test Fees

Fee information is available at www.afcpe.org/about/main-price-list.

Examination Administration

Examinations are delivered by computer at more than 300 AMP/PSI Assessment Centers located throughout the United States. Computer examinations are administered by appointment only, Monday through Friday at 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Saturday appointments may be scheduled based on availability. Available dates are provided when scheduling an examination. Candidates are scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

For test taker support and resources, please visit www.psiexams.com.

Assessment Center Locations

PSI Assessment Centers have been selected to provide accessibility to the most candidates in all states and major metropolitan areas. A current listing of PSI Assessment Centers, including addresses and driving directions, may be viewed at PSI's website located at <https://test-takers.psiexams.com/afcpe>. Specific address information will be provided when you schedule an examination appointment.

Scheduling an Examination

The AFC® exam is offered at PSI Assessment Centers throughout the United States. Once you have applied and have been approved, there are two ways to schedule your examination:

1. Online Scheduling: Go to <https://test-takers.psiexams.com/afcpe> at any time and select “Sign In.” Follow the simple, step-by-step instructions to create an account and register for the examination; or
2. Telephone Scheduling: Call PSI at 888-519-9901 to schedule an examination appointment. This toll-free number is answered from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Central Time) Monday through Thursday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Friday, and 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday.

If you contact PSI by 3:00 p.m. Central Time on...	Depending on availability, your examination may be scheduled as early as...
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday/Saturday
Thursday	Monday
Friday	Tuesday

When you schedule your examination appointment, be prepared to confirm a location and a preferred date and time for testing. You will be asked to provide your unique identification number which will be provided via email and available in your certification dashboard at my.afcpe.org upon payment of your exam fee. You will be notified of the time to report to the Assessment Center and, if an e-mail address is provided, you will be sent an e-mail confirmation notice.

If special accommodations are being requested, complete the Request for Special Accommodations form posted on the Candidate Resources page at my.afcpe.org and submit at least 45 days before the desired examination date.

International Testing

The AFC Certification is accredited in the United States and is intended for professionals who primarily serve US residents. The AFC Certification may not be beneficial for professionals not serving this population.

The AFC exam may be administered at an international testing center for certain candidates. If you are an active-duty US servicemember stationed overseas, or a direct family member of the aforementioned, AFCPE offers the administration of its certification exam at an international testing center coordinated through PSI.

If you anticipate the need to test internationally, you can [use this search tool](#) to identify PSI test locations near you. Once your AFC exam fee is paid, you may schedule your exam with PSI. Instructions will be sent to you via email and will be available in your myAFCPE Dashboard.

Additional fees apply for testing internationally. See our [main pricing page](#) for details.

If you have any questions regarding international testing, please contact exams@afcpe.org.

Rescheduling or Canceling an Examination

Applicants may reschedule the scheduled examination date through the PSI candidate portal at <https://test-takers.psiexams.com/afcpe/test>.

Missed Appointments and Cancellations

You will forfeit your examination registration and fee under the following circumstances:

- You wish to reschedule an examination but fail to contact PSI at least two business days before the scheduled testing session.
- You wish to reschedule a second time.
- You appear more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- You fail to report for an examination appointment.

A new examination request and the current retake fee are required to reapply for the examination.

Incident Weather, Power Failure or Emergency

In rare cases weather or an emergency forces a test center closure. If this happens you will be contacted by the PSI rescheduling department within 24-48 hours to rebook your appointment.

If the power to an Assessment Center is temporarily interrupted during an administration, your examination will be restarted. The responses provided up to the point of interruption will be intact, but for security reasons, the questions will be scrambled.

AFCPE® CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION CODE OF CONDUCT

I will not engage in Exam Misconduct, which is any activity or conduct that compromises or attempts to compromise the reputation, integrity, validity, or security of the Exam. Exam Misconduct includes conduct occurring during registration for the Exam, as well as conduct occurring before, during, and after the administration of the Exam; and includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Giving or receiving assistance on the Exam, including attempting to communicate with fellow candidates or other persons, and using books, papers, or other study aids during the Exam;
- b. Disclosing, publishing, reproducing, or transmitting the contents of the Exam, in whole or in part, in any manner or by any means, for any purpose;
- c. Creating a disturbance during the Exam;
- d. Removing Exam Materials or notes from the testing room;
- e. Impersonating a candidate or other forms of misrepresentation;
- f. Failing to follow the directions of testing personnel before, during, or after the Exam;
- g. Using unapproved calculators, mobile phones, computers, tablets, wearable technology such as fitness tracking devices, smart watches, cameras, headsets, or any other remote communication or photographic devices, during the Exam;
- h. Altering Exam results issued by AFCPE and/or misrepresenting pass/fail results;
- i. Altering any documentation issued to me by AFCPE or its testing partner in connection with admission to the Exam;
- j. Falsifying or misrepresenting information in connection with Exam registration, requests for accommodation, scholarships, Exam conduct, Exam-related investigations, or any other communications with AFCPE in connection with the Exam or other initial certification requirements;
- k. Failing to comply with PSI Services Security Procedures;
- l. Failing to cooperate with any AFCPE investigation;
- m. Failing to comply with AFCPE's Standards and Policies;
- n. Engaging in any other conduct that could be considered by AFCPE, in its sole discretion, to compromise or attempt to compromise the reputation, integrity, validity, or security of the Exam or AFCPE.

I understand that testing personnel will report to AFCPE any actual or perceived Exam Misconduct or violations of Exam Policies that occur before, during, or after the Exam administration.

Section 2: Preparing for the Examination

How the Exam Is Developed

The AFC® exam is designed to assess the knowledge and skills required for certification in financial counseling.

The AFCPE Certification Council develops the AFC® examination in partnership with professional testing consultants and panels of qualified subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure the examination is developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted practices for the development of certification examinations. Diverse groups of qualified subject matter experts participate in examination development activities including the development of the examination content outline and the examination items. SMEs are selected based on their demonstrated expertise, experience level, geographic representation, and specialty area.

A national job analysis study was conducted in 2023 to describe, in specific terms, the precise nature of the tasks performed by professionals who work in the field of financial counseling, coaching, and education. The study included a national survey of financial counselors, the results of which were analyzed with SMEs to develop the content outline for the AFC® exam.

Teams of SMEs, facilitated by professional testing experts, developed the exam items. All exam items are directly linked to the content outline and undergo multiple reviews before being placed on the AFC® exam. The Certification Council oversees a continual process of item writing, review, and evaluation to ensure that AFC® exam content remains up-to-date, accurate, relevant, and aligned with the examination content outline.

A criterion-referenced standard setting process is used to establish the passing point for the exam. Each candidate's performance on the exam is measured against a predetermined standard. Candidates are not graded on a curve and do not compete against each other or a quota.

This passing score for the exam is established using a panel of SMEs who carefully review each exam item to determine the level of knowledge or skill that is expected. The passing score is based on the panel's established difficulty ratings for each exam item. Under the guidance of our testing consultants, the panel develops and recommends the passing point which is reviewed and approved by the Certification Council.

The passing point for the exam is established to identify individuals with an acceptable level of knowledge and skill. Receiving a higher than passing score is not an indication of more advanced

knowledge or a predictor of better job performance. All individuals who pass the exam, regardless of their score, have demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge.

A summary of the last completed job analysis study is available on our website at www.afcpe.org/certification/#how-exam-is-developed.

Studying for the Exam

The exam covers the topic areas listed below in the Exam Content Outline. Candidates are encouraged to review these areas and the items listed below in preparation for the exam.

The AFC® exam is offered in a single, three-hour session with 165 multiple-choice questions (150 operational and 15 pretest). Each question contains four options, only one of which is the correct answer.

Embedded in the examination are “pretest” questions, which are included in the examination for statistical purposes only. Pretest questions are placed on the exam to evaluate the item’s difficulty level for possible inclusion as a scored question in the future. Candidates’ scores are based upon the number of scored operational items on the exam — pretest items do not affect the candidates’ score. Pretest questions are dispersed throughout the examination and cannot be identified.

AFC® Core Competencies

AFC® certification helps financial counseling professionals better understand how diverse backgrounds, perspectives and experience impact a client’s money behaviors. A lens of cultural competency is woven throughout the program.

The AFC® core competencies guide the various education pathways and serve as an outline for the exam. A detailed list of AFC® core competencies is provided and available for download from our website: www.afcpe.org/certification/accredited-financial-counselor/afc-core-competencies.

Study Resources

The AFCPE Certification Council does not require, provide, accredit, or endorse any specific study guides, training or review courses, or other examination preparation products. The Certification Council, certification staff, certification committee members, and certification subject matter experts do not have involvement in the creation, accreditation, approval, endorsement or delivery of examination review courses, preparatory materials, educational programs, or training programs/products that prepare candidates for the AFC® certification examination. Following are related resources. This list is not exhaustive and candidates are not required to utilize these resources.

- AFC® Candidate Handbook
- AFC® Learning System*
- AFC® sample exam questions

- AFC® Practice Exam
- Developing Helping Skills, Chang, Decker, Scott
- Facilitating Financial Health, Klontz
- Financial Counseling, Durband, Law, Mazzolini
- Financial Counseling: A Strategic Approach, Pulvino & Pulvino
- Introduction to Personal Finance, Grable & Palmer
- Personal Finance, Garman and Fogue
- Personal Finance, Garman and Fox
- Personal Finance: Turning Money Into Wealth, Keown
- The Social Work Interview, Kadushin & Kadushin
- Surviving Debt, National Consumer Law Center

**The AFC® Learning System is an electronic resource. Upon completion of the AFC® program and/or if your AFC® candidacy expires, your access will be removed.*

Strategies for Taking Multiple Choice Exams

- ✓ Read each question carefully, including all possible answers, before choosing the single best response.
- ✓ Pace yourself and remember that you can skip questions and come back to them later; sometimes it helps to answer the easiest questions first.
- ✓ If you are not sure about an answer, make an educated guess. Your score is based on the total number of correct answers.
- ✓ Responses are in random order. Looking for patterns will not help you.

Section 3: Taking the Examination

What to Expect on Exam Day

To provide a fair and consistent exam experience for all candidates, standardized procedures and strict security protocols are followed for the exam delivery. Candidates are required to follow all exam site rules at all times. Failure to follow these rules may result in termination of a candidate's testing session and/or invalidation of the candidate's exam score.

The AFC® exam is offered on a rolling basis – so you can test whenever you feel ready. Your examination will be given via computer at a PSI Assessment Center. Virtual testing is not available. You do not need any computer experience or typing skills to take the computer examination. On the day of your examination appointment, report to the Assessment Center no later than your scheduled testing time. **IF YOU ARRIVE MORE THAN 15 MINUTES AFTER THE SCHEDULED TESTING TIME, YOU WILL NOT BE ADMITTED.**

During the exam, candidates will have the opportunity to comment on any exam items they feel may be unfair or unclear. This feedback will be reviewed as part of the overall examination review and quality assurance process. Candidates will not receive direct responses regarding specific item feedback.

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of AFCPE. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may subject you to severe civil and criminal penalties.

PSI administration and security standards are designed to ensure all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The Assessment Center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- Examinations are proprietary. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, pagers, or cellular/smart phones are allowed in the testing room. Possession of a cellular/smart phone or other electronic devices while in the testing room is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.
- No technical or programmable calculators are allowed. Candidates may only use silent, non-programmable calculators without alpha keys or printing capabilities in the testing room.
- No guests, visitors, or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.

- All test takers will undergo a metal detection wand inspection as part of the test center security checks.

Personal Belongings

No personal items, valuables or weapons should be brought to the Assessment Center. Only wallets and keys are permitted. Large coats and jackets must be left outside the testing room. You will be provided a soft locker or secure space to store your wallet and/or keys while in the testing room. You will not have access to these items until after the examination is completed.

Please note the following items will **not** be allowed in the testing room and should be left in the secured space provided.

- watches
- hats
- wallets
- keys

Once you have secured your personal belongings, you will be asked to pull out your pockets to ensure they are empty. If you bring personal items that will not fit in the secure space provided, you will not be able to test. The site will not store or be responsible for your personal belongings.

If any personal items are observed or heard (e.g., cellular/smart phones, alarms) in the testing room after the examination is started, you will be dismissed, and the exam and your exam fee will be forfeited.

Examination Restrictions

- Pencils will be provided during check-in.
- You will be provided with one piece of scratch paper at a time to use during the examination. If you need additional scratch paper, you can exchange a used sheet for a fresh sheet from the proctor. You must return the scratch paper to the proctor at the completion of testing, or you will not receive your score report.
- No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the Assessment Center.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- Eating, drinking or smoking is not permitted in the Assessment Center.
- You may take a break whenever you wish, but you will not be allowed additional time to make up for time lost during breaks.

Misconduct

If you engage in any of the following conduct during the examination you may be dismissed, your scores will not be reported, and examination fees will not be refunded. Examples of misconduct are when you:

- create a disturbance, are abusive, or otherwise uncooperative;
- display and/or use electronic communications devices such as pagers and/or cellular/smart phones;
- talk or participate in a conversation with other examination candidates;
- give or receive help or are suspected of doing so;
- leave the Assessment Center during the administration;
- attempt to record examination questions or make notes;
- attempt to take the examination for someone else;
- are observed with personal belongings, or
- are observed with unauthorized notes, books, or other aids not listed on the roster.

Identification

To gain admission to the Assessment Center, you must present two forms of identification. The primary form must be government-issued, current, and include your name, signature, and photograph. No form of temporary identification will be accepted. You will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity.

- Examples of valid primary forms of identification are driver's license with photograph; state identification card with photograph; passport; military identification card with photograph.
- The secondary form of identification must display your name and signature for signature verification (e.g., a credit card with signature, Social Security card with signature, employment/student ID card with signature).
- If your name on your registration is different than it appears on your identification, you must bring proof of your name change (e.g., marriage license, divorce decree, or court order).

Candidates must have proper identification to gain admission to the Assessment Center. Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a missed appointment. There will be no refund of examination fees.

Beginning the Examination

After your identification has been confirmed, you will be directed to a testing carrel. You will be instructed on-screen to enter your identification number. You will take your photograph which will remain on screen throughout your examination session. This photograph will also print on your score report. Before attempting the examination, you will be given the opportunity to practice taking an examination on the computer. The time you use for this practice examination is NOT counted as part of your examination time or score.

When you are comfortable with the computer testing process, you may quit the practice session and begin the timed examination.

Following the practice examination, you will begin the timed examination. Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on-screen.

The computer monitors the time you spend on the examination. The examination will terminate if you exceed the time allowed. You may click on the "Time" box in the lower menu bar on the screen to monitor your time. A digital clock indicates the time remaining for you to complete the examination. The Time feature may be turned off during the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the lower right of the screen. Choices of answers to the examination question are identified as A, B, C, or D. You must indicate your choice by either typing the letter in the response box in the lower left portion of the computer screen or clicking on the option using the mouse. To change your answer, enter a different option by typing in the letter in the response box or by clicking on the option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish during the examination time limit.

To move to the next question, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right portion of the screen. This action will move you forward through the examination question by question. If you wish to review any question(s), click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow key to move backward through the examination.

An examination question may be left unanswered for a return later in the examination session. Questions may be bookmarked for later review by clicking on the blank square to the right of the Time button.

To identify all unanswered and/or bookmarked questions, click on the hand icon. When the examination is completed, the number of examination questions answered is reported. If all questions have not been answered and there is time remaining, you may return to the examination and answer those questions.

Be sure to provide an answer for each examination question before exiting the examination. There is no penalty for guessing.

During the examination, comments may be provided for any question by clicking on the button displaying an exclamation point (!) to the left of the Time button. This opens a dialogue box where comments may be entered. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

Special Accommodations

AFCPE and PSI comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with a disability covered by this Act. We strive to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely because of that disability.

An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Verification of the disability and a statement of the specific type of assistance needed must be made in writing at least 45 calendar days before your desired examination date by completing the [Request for Special Examination Accommodations form](#) posted to the Candidate Resources page at my.afcpe.org. PSI will review the submitted forms and will contact you regarding the decision for accommodations.

Candidates requesting special accommodations must call PSI at 888-519-9901 / 800-345-6559 to schedule their examination.

The information provided by candidates and any documentation regarding such disability and special accommodation will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be shared with any source without the candidate's express written permission, except for AFCPE and authorized testing consultants.

1. Wheelchair access is available at all established Assessment Centers. Candidates must advise PSI at the time of scheduling that wheelchair access is necessary.
2. Candidates with visual, sensory, physical, or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements.

Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf

PSI is equipped with Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) to assist deaf and hearing-impaired candidates. TDD calling is available 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Central Time) Monday thru Friday at 913-895-4637. This TDD phone option is for individuals equipped with compatible TDD machinery.

Copyright Information

All proprietary rights to AFCPE exams, including copyright, are held by the AFCPE. To protect the validity of the scores reported, candidates must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling these copyrighted proprietary materials. The law strictly prohibits any attempt to reproduce all or part of any AFCPE exam. Such attempts may include but are not limited to: removing materials from the testing room; aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of the exam; posting content on any discussion forum; and selling, distributing, receiving, or having unauthorized possession of any portion of the exam or practice exams. Alleged copyright violations will be investigated and, if warranted, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. It should be noted that examination scores may be invalidated in the event of this type of suspected breach. Permanent revocation of certification may occur if allegations are substantiated.

Section 4: After the Examination

Exam Results

Candidates will receive automatic results/score reports at the examination site immediately following the examination administration. Score reports are released directly to candidates only. Results are not released by phone. Requests for exam results to be released to anyone other than the candidate must be made in writing by the candidate.

Score reports will include a “pass” or “fail” result, scoring information, and general information regarding administrative next steps. Diagnostic information is provided on score reports. Diagnostic breakdowns, calculated per domain, are intended to identify content areas by showing areas of relative strength and weakness. Content area scores are provided for informational purposes only to assist candidates in preparing for a re-examination attempt (failing candidates) or in selecting topic areas for future continuing education (passing candidates).

After completing the examination, you will be asked to complete a short evaluation of your examination experience. Then you will be instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive an examination completion report.

Scores Canceled by the Client or PSI

PSI is responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. PSI reserves the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of its regulations is discovered.

Understanding Your Scores

A criterion-referenced standard setting process is used to establish the passing point for each exam. This means that each candidate’s performance on the exam is measured against a predetermined standard. Candidates are not graded on a curve and do not compete against each other or a quota.

This passing point is established using a panel of subject matter experts who carefully reviewed each exam question to determine the basic level of knowledge or skill that is expected. The passing point for the exam is established to identify individuals with an acceptable level of knowledge and skill. Receiving a higher than passing score is not an indication of more advanced knowledge or a predictor of better job performance. All individuals who pass the exam, regardless of their score, have demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge.

How are AFC® exam scores calculated?

1. First, we counted the number of questions on the test that you answered correctly. We did not deduct any points for incorrect answers. (There is no penalty for guessing.)
2. Then we converted your raw score (number of correct answers on the test) to a “scaled score.” Scaled scores have the same meaning for all forms of the AFC® exam, no matter when or where you tested. Scaled scores are not a “number correct” or “percent correct” score, but rather a distribution, ranging from 200 to 800, which provides a consistent metric across all versions of the exam, each with different difficulty levels.

How to interpret your content area table provided in your score report

The bar graphs represent an approximation of performance in each content area, not an actual score. Content area data provides a breakdown of your performance across different topic areas, helping you identify areas where you excelled and areas where you struggled. This breakdown is provided for informational purposes only to assist in preparing for a re-examination attempt (failing candidates) or in selecting topic areas for future continuing education (passing candidates). Pass/fail status is determined based on the whole exam and not on performance by content area score. Because content area score information is based on a small number of items in comparison to the full exam, you should review all content areas as part of your exam preparation or professional development plan.

Re-Examination

Candidates that do not achieve a passing score on the examination must wait for a minimum of thirty days between administrations before a subsequent reexamination attempt. Candidates may take the examination a maximum of five times as long as they continue to meet the published eligibility criteria. Candidates who do not pass the exam after five (5) attempts must enroll as a new candidate and meet all certification requirements including Education, Exam, Experience, and Ethics to obtain certification. Visit <https://www.afcpe.org/certification/afc/#4steps> for more information.

To retake the examination, the candidate must repeat all registration processes as outlined in the Candidate Handbook, including submitting the application to test and paying the retake fee.

Exam Appeals

The Certification Council consistently evaluates the examinations to ensure they accurately measure competency in the required knowledge areas. While taking the exams, candidates have the opportunity to provide comments on any questions. All substantive comments will be reviewed.

Candidates who fail an exam may file an appeal if they believe the exam failure is a result of:

1. Examination scoring/grading errors
2. Inappropriate exam administration procedures that violate AFCPE Certification Council policy
3. Testing conditions severe enough to cause a significant disruption of the examination process (including environmental conditions or disruptions caused by other candidates)

Any serious incident occurring during exam administration should also be reported to the on-site proctor immediately.

Complaints or appeals may be submitted in writing before the exam and up to thirty days after exam administration. Complaints or appeals will not be considered after thirty days have expired. Written appeals must be submitted via email or mail with supporting documentation or evidence to the Director of Certification.

The burden of proof for examination appeals is borne by the applicant. The Director of Certification will review the appeal request and obtain additional information from the test site proctor or testing agency as needed (irregularity report, etc.). The Certification Council will review the appeal within thirty (30) days and will make a determination within sixty (60) days. The decision of the Certification Council is final. Submission of an appeal has no bearing on the Candidate's deadline. An extension must be filed if the Candidate's deadline falls before appeal results are provided.

Due to the thorough review and analysis of each question during the examination construction procedures, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual exam questions or answers. Because of the secure nature of these examinations, AFCPE will not disclose examination questions before, or after, the administration of the exam. Candidates' responses to specific test questions (correct or not correct) will not be disclosed.

Section 5: Maintaining Certification

AFCPE supports the ongoing professional development of its certificants. The mandatory renewal process provides certificants with the opportunity to demonstrate the reinforcement and expansion of their knowledge and skills pertaining to the full spectrum of personal finance and counseling. Renewal also provides encouragement to, and acknowledgment for, participation in ongoing professional development activities and lifelong learning. Therefore, the renewal requirements include continuing education and professional activities that enhance ongoing professional development, recognize learning opportunities, promote continuing competence, and provide a process for both obtaining and recording professional development achievements.

Professional development is a career-long process. Over the course of a career, many changes will occur in a field of study or profession requiring an updating of knowledge and skills. These changes include the introduction of new and varied product and service offerings in the financial marketplace, as well as changes in laws and technical knowledge related to personal finance and counseling. The purpose of requiring certificants to receive continuing education is threefold:

- to enhance the individual professional's capacity to serve his or her constituents,
- to protect the public interest, and
- to uphold the rigor of the certification programs.

To maintain competence and prevent professional obsolescence, the Certification Council requires that each AFC® certificant participate periodically in continuing education to refresh existing knowledge and skills, and to acquire knowledge and proficiency pertaining to new advances as well as state of the art information over the full spectrum of personal finance and counseling.

Renewal Period

Certification must be renewed once every two years to maintain use of the AFC® credential

To renew the Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC) credential, individuals are required to pay an annual fee and complete 30 hours of continuing education every 2 years. Within these 30 hours, 2 hours must focus on ethics. This requirement ensures that professionals remain informed and current in their field. This requirement is vital for several reasons:

Alignment with Industry Standards

Credential renewal through continuing education aligns with best practices observed across industries, such as financial planning or human resources (e.g., CFP, SHRM certification processes), where a similar requirement of 30 hours of continuing education (to include 2 hours of ethics focused content) every two

years is standard. By maintaining these comparable standards, certified professionals uphold the credibility and rigor of their designation, fostering trust and confidence among clients and colleagues.

Encouragement of Incremental Learning

While there is no mandate for monthly continuing education, the total requirement of 30 hours of continuing education (to include 2 hours of ethics focused content) over two years inherently fosters incremental learning. This requirement encourages professionals to pace their development, gradually integrating new knowledge into their practice. Such an approach ensures steady professional growth and avoids the pitfalls of condensed or rushed educational efforts.

Fostering Specialized Knowledge

The personal finance field is expansive, encompassing diverse roles and industries. Continuing education allows certified professionals to acquire specialized knowledge tailored to their unique client base, supplementing their foundational certification and broadening their expertise. This ensures they are equipped to address the specific challenges and needs of the populations they serve.

Ensuring Current and Accurate Knowledge

The financial counseling profession is characterized by a vast and rapidly changing knowledge base beyond what is covered in the AFC Core Competencies. Requiring continuing education ensures that certified professionals remain informed about the latest trends, regulations, and best practices. This enables them to provide accurate, timely, and relevant information to clients.

Upholding Certification Integrity

Periodic renewal of credentials reinforces the rigor and prestige of the certification itself. It demonstrates the professional's commitment to maintaining high standards and engaging in lifelong learning, which are key pillars of excellence in the financial counseling field.

Requiring certified professionals to renew their credentials every two years through continuing education ensures they stay knowledgeable and capable in their field, benefiting both them and the public.

Renewal Requirements

Certificants who have received the AFC® credential are required to complete thirty continuing education units (CEUs) during a two-year reporting cycle. CEUs earned during one reporting cycle do not carry over to future reporting periods.

Renewal of an AFC® credential requires:

1. Current AFC® certification (active status)
2. Acquire and submit 30 continuing education units that support the AFC® role
 - 2 CEUs must be for Ethics
3. Payment of the Annual Certification Fee
4. Attestation to comply with the AFC® Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

OR

Applicants for renewal can pass the current AFC® examination in lieu of the continuing education requirement.

Acceptable Continuing Education

All continuing education must be related to the AFC® role. Often, certificants will meet the CEU requirement by attending programs offered or sponsored by other organizations. To ensure credit for a program offered by organizations other than AFCPE, the certificant may request pre-approval at least 14 business days before registration or attendance. Pre-approval may be requested using the online form available on the AFCPE website. AFCPE staff will review each request and respond with acceptance or denial of CEUs via email. It is the responsibility of the certificant to retain a copy of the request and response for his/her personal files, and to submit verification of attendance through their myAFCPE Dashboard.

The purpose of post certification requirements is to enhance the professional's ability to serve his or her clients. Programs should be of sufficient depth and breadth to increase the skills and knowledge of the professional and vary in program method and content. Programs unique to a place of employment, operational training programs, or programs within the professional's job description, or designed for consumer use, are not eligible for CEUs.

Renewal Application Requirements

AFCPE strictly adheres to the standards of maintenance requirements for certification. It is the responsibility of the certificant to comply with all procedures and deadlines in order to maintain their credential. Programs must pertain to **personal finance** subject matter, must enhance your ability and expertise, and must cover one or more of AFCPE's Core Competencies.

Examples of Accepted Subject Matter:

- Behavioral Training
- Budgeting
- Counseling Theory
- Credit
- Debt Management
- Education Theory and Skill Development

- Estate Planning / Retirement
- Financial Coaching
- Financial Practice and Business
- Insurance
- Housing
- Ethics*
- Tax

Note: The only required category is Ethics*. Certified professionals are required to earn 2 Ethics related CEUs per reporting period.

AFC® certified professionals are responsible for maintaining records of their continuing education credits and may be required to substantiate these units during random audits. Certificants are encouraged to maintain an electronic portfolio. However, if requested, documentation may be submitted to the AFCPE electronically or in a hard copy format.

Incomplete Renewal Applications

Renewal applications are considered incomplete if any of the requirements are missing, or the appropriate fee is not included.

Candidates will be notified via email that the renewal application is incomplete and what must be done to complete the application. These notices will include a deadline for response.

If a certificant fails to resolve noted deficiencies of an incomplete application within the timeframe established by AFCPE, all fees will be forfeited and certification will lapse. If a certificant fails to resolve noted deficiencies for six-months after lapse, certification will be revoked. While in a lapsed or revoked status, an individual is not certified and may not use the AFC® certification.

Annual Fee

For an AFC® certificant to ensure that he/she remains in good standing, certification must be renewed annually through payment of the AFCPE certification fee, and every two years through submission of the required continuing education units. The annual fee is due by June 30 of each year, commencing the year after certification is awarded. Fees are published on the AFCPE website at www.afcpe.org/about/main-price-list.

Renewal Expiration

All applications, associated forms, and fee(s) are due according to the schedule below:

- CEU credits must be submitted and approved by June 30 of the reporting cycle (every even year)

- Annual fees are due by June 30 of each year

If a candidate files for renewal (pays the annual AFCPE certification fee) after the reporting cycle end date, a late fee may be enforced. It is recommended that candidates keep a copy of the completed continuing education, annual fee payment receipts, and associated forms.

Certification renewal is the responsibility of each certificant. AFCPE is not responsible for notices that fail to reach certificants.

Renewal Extension

- If an individual does not report CEU requirements by the end of that reporting period, an extension of no longer than six (6) months may be requested to submit the outstanding documentation for the most recent reporting period only. Current penalty extension fees apply.

At the end of the 6 month extension (December 31 of new reporting period), if the candidate has not submitted the required CEUs, the candidate's certification will be revoked.

- An extension will not be granted for certification annual fees. Fees are due by June 30 each year.

Late fees will be incurred for each month that an annual certification fee is not paid. After 6 months of late fees (December 31), if the annual certification fee is not paid, then the candidate's certification will be revoked.

Renewal Acceptance

AFCPE will issue an updated certificate to the certificant once all renewal requirements have been fulfilled. Renewal applications will not be accepted from individuals whose certification is in a state of suspension or has been revoked. Reinstatement or recertification is required if certification has been suspended or revoked. While in a lapsed or revoked status, an individual is not certified and may not use the AFC® certification.

Failure to Renew Certification

Renewal is mandatory for all certificants. Failure to renew certification by the deadline will result in suspension of the credential (see "Reinstatement" below). Individuals whose certification has expired or been suspended or revoked may not represent him/herself as an AFC® certificant and may not use the designation until he/she receives official notice that the renewal requirements have been satisfied or that certification status has been reinstated. The individual's name will be removed from the list of certificants available to the public on the AFCPE website.

Reinstatement

To ensure the integrity of all professionals in our field, renewal of certification is required once every two years, beginning one year after your certification has been issued. If annual fees and CEU

requirements are not met, and an extension request has not been submitted and approved, the credential will be revoked, and re-certification will be required.

An individual may request reinstatement of his/her AFC® certification after voluntary relinquishment, or failure to renew one time during the life of the credential, by submitting a reinstatement extension request and paying a non-refundable reinstatement fee. To reinstate, individuals will be required to submit documentation of the continuing education they would have been required to submit if certification had been maintained following the required two-year recertification cycle and pay any outstanding fees. After three years of lapsed credential status, the individual must retake and pass the certification exam but is not required to reapply for the certification to reinstate the credential. After five years of lapsed credential status, the individual must reapply (meet all eligibility requirements) and pass the certification exam to reinstate the credential.

Reinstatement may be requested via email to certification@afcpe.org.

Upon receipt of the reinstatement application email and fee, AFCPE will review and inform applicant what steps are required to complete the reinstatement (reporting of required Continuing Education Units, and/or notice of appropriate fees).

Applicants for reinstatement must complete and submit all reinstatement requirements within 90 days of submitting the reinstatement application and receiving approval from AFCPE. A reinstatement application is valid for 90 days.

Once all requirements for reinstatement have been met, email confirmation will be sent to the individual and an updated electronic certificate will be issued. Individuals are not certified and are prohibited from using the AFC® mark until the entire reinstatement process is complete.

Continuing Education Requirements for Reinstatement

- If applying for reinstatement within 180 days of the certification expiration date, applicants must complete an extension request, report outstanding continuing education units, and pay any applicable late fees to AFCPE prior to reinstatement.
- If applying for reinstatement more than 180 days, but less than three years, after the certification expiration, applicants must complete a reinstatement application, report outstanding continuing education units, and pay any applicable late fees to AFCPE prior to reinstatement. Alternatively, applicants can pay for and pass the current AFC® examination in lieu of the continuing education requirement. Standard exam policies apply; full exam fee charged per exam.
- If applying for reinstatement three to five years after the certification expiration, applicants must complete a reinstatement application, and pay for and pass the current AFC® examination as a

condition of reinstatement in lieu of the continuing education requirement. Standard exam policies apply; full exam fee charged per exam.

- If applying for reinstatement after five years, applicants must re-enroll in the AFC® certification program.

AFC® Certification Reinstatement Requirements

If...	Then...	Plus...	Plus...
Applying for Reinstatement < 180 days of certification expiration	Reinstatement Application and \$200 Reinstatement Fee	Fees (includes certification fees/late fees and administrative fees) \$10 late fee/month	Continuing Education must be up-to-date
Applying for Reinstatement 6 months – 3 Years	Reinstatement Application and \$200 Reinstatement Fee	Certification fees for the current renewal period and any other outstanding fees -OR- Current exam fee	Report CE hours due at the time of expiration and hours accrued during expiration. Hours reported must not be more than two years old at the time of reinstatement -OR- Pass the current AFC exam
Applying for Reinstatement 3-5 Years	Reinstatement Application and \$200 Reinstatement Fee	Current exam fee	Pass the current AFC exam

Audit Process

AFCPE reserves the right to verify information supplied by, or on behalf of, a certificant. If requested, the certificant will be asked to submit documentation substantiating eligibility.

AFCPE reviews and approves or rejects all submitted CEU requests. You are required to submit verifiable documentation for each activity submitted as part of your renewal application (CEUs). **It is recommended that certificants retain all records for at least two (2) years following the cycle end date.**

If credit for any program or activity (i.e. for which CEUs are reported) is denied, the certificant may attempt to cure by providing the requested documentation where applicable. If the necessary hours are not reported by June 30 of the reporting cycle (every even year), the individual will no longer be certified and will not be authorized to use the AFC® designation.

Renewal Appeals

The certification renewal decision will be based solely on materials submitted by, or on behalf of, the certificant.

Appeals regarding adverse renewal eligibility and status decisions must be submitted in writing to the Certification Program Director within thirty (30) calendar days after the adverse decision or notification. The candidate must submit the appeal in writing (email is acceptable) and explain in detail: 1) The nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request, and 2) all reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents. The Certification Program Director will review the appeal within fifteen (15) days. If the issue can be resolved at the staff level, the Certification Program Director will make a determination and will notify the Council of the result.

If the issue cannot be resolved by the Certification Program Director, he/she will refer the appeal to the Certification Council. The appeal will also be referred to the Council if the candidate does not accept a determination by the Certification Program Director.

The Council will review the appeal within thirty (30) days and will make a determination within sixty (60) days. The decision of the Certification Council is final.

Section 6: Complaints and Disciplinary Actions

To maintain and enhance the credibility of AFCPE's certification programs, the Certification Council has adopted the following procedures to allow individuals to bring complaints concerning the conduct of AFCPE certificants' to the AFCPE Certification Council.

In the event a certificant violates the AFCPE Code of Ethics and/or certification program rules, requirements, and/or policies, the Certification Council may reprimand or suspend the individual or may revoke certification.

The grounds for sanctions under these procedures may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Violation of established AFCPE Code of Ethics, rules, requirements, and/or policies.
- Conviction of a felony or other crime of moral turpitude under federal or state law in a matter related to the practice of, or qualifications for, financial counseling.
- Gross negligence, willful misconduct, or other unethical conduct in the performance of services for which the individual has achieved AFCPE certification.
- Fraud, falsification, or misrepresentation in an initial application or renewal application for certification.
- Falsification of any material information requested by the AFCPE or Certification Council.
- Misrepresentation of AFCPE certification status.
- Cheating on any certification examination.

Actions taken under this policy do not constitute enforcement of the law, although referral to appropriate federal, state, or local government agencies may be made about the conduct of the certificant in appropriate situations. Individuals initially bringing complaints are not entitled to any relief or damages by virtue of this process, although they will receive notice of the actions taken.

Complaints

Complaints may be submitted by any individual or entity. Complaints should be reported to the Certification Council in writing to mstarkey@afcpe.org and should include:

- the name of the person submitting the complaint,
- the name of the person the complaint is regarding,
- other relevant identifying information, if applicable,
- a detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges,
- and any relevant supporting documentation.

Information submitted during the complaint and investigation process is considered confidential and will be handled in accordance with the Council's Confidentiality policy. Inquiries or submissions other than complaints may be reviewed and handled by the Council Chair or Director of Certification at its discretion.

Upon receipt and preliminary review of a complaint involving the certification program, the Director of Certification in consultation with the Certification Council Chair may conclude, in their sole discretion, that the submission:

- contains unreliable or insufficient information, or
- is patently frivolous or inconsequential.

If the Director of Certification and Certification Council Chair do not reach consensus, the preliminary review may be referred to the Certification Council.

In such cases, the Director of Certification and Certification Council Chair may determine that the submission does not constitute a valid and actionable complaint that would justify bringing it before the Certification Council for investigation and a determination of whether there has been a violation of substantive requirements of the certification process. If so, the submission is disposed of by notice from the Director of Certification and Certification Council to its submitter.

The preliminary review will be conducted within 45 business days of receipt of the complaint.

If a submission is deemed by the Director of Certification and Certification Council Chair to be a valid and actionable complaint, the Certification Council will provide written notice to the certificant whose conduct has been called into question by registered mail with return receipt within 90 days of receipt of a grievance ("Notification of Grievance"). The certificant whose conduct is at issue shall, within 45 days from the date of receipt of the Notice of Grievance, file a response to the allegations with the Certification Council.

The Executive Director will be notified of all complaints and will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of all investigations.

Complaint Review

For each complaint the Council concludes is a valid and actionable complaint, the Certification Council authorizes an investigation into its specific facts or circumstances to whatever extent is necessary in order to clarify, expand, or corroborate the information provided by the submitter.

The Certification Council appoints a Review Committee of three or more individuals, one of which must be a member of the Certification Council, and at least two of which shall be Designees who are authorized to use the same designation as the Designee charged, to investigate and make an appropriate determination with respect to each such valid and actionable complaint; the Review Committee may review one or more such complaints as determined by the Certification Council. The Review Committee initially determines whether it is appropriate to review the complaint under these Procedures or whether the matter should be referred to another entity engaged in the administration of law. The timeline for responses and for providing any additional information will be established by the Review Committee. The Review Committee may be assisted in the conduct of its investigation by other members of the Certification Council or by Board and/or AFCPE staff or legal counsel. The Certification Council exercises general supervision over all investigations.

Both the individual submitting the complaint and the certificant who is the subject of the investigation (or his or her employer) may be contacted for additional information with respect to the complaint. The Review Committee, or the Certification Council on its behalf, may at its discretion contact other individuals who may have knowledge of the facts and circumstances surrounding the complaint.

All investigations and deliberations of the Review Committee and the Certification Council are conducted in confidence, with all written communications sealed and marked "Personal and Confidential," and they are conducted objectively, without any indication of prejudgment. An investigation may be directed toward any aspect of a complaint which is relevant or potentially relevant. Formal hearings are not held, and the parties are not expected to be represented by legal counsel, although the Review Committee and Certification Council may consult their own legal counsel.

Members of the Review Committee will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the activities of the Committee.

Determination of Violation

Upon completion of an investigation, the Review Committee recommends whether the Certification Council should make a determination that there has been a violation of policy. When the Review Committee recommends that the Certification Council find a violation, the Review Committee also recommends imposition of an appropriate sanction. If the Review Committee so recommends, a proposed determination with a proposed sanction is prepared under the supervision of the chair and is

presented by a representative of the Review Committee to the Certification Council along with the record of the Review Committee's investigation.

If the Review Committee recommends against a determination that a violation has occurred, the complaint is dismissed with notice to the certificant, the certificant's employer (if involved in the investigation), and the individual or entity who submitted the complaint.

The Certification Council reviews the recommendation of the Review Committee based upon the record of the investigation. The Certification Council may accept, reject, or modify the Review Committee's recommendation, either with respect to the determination of a violation or the recommended sanction to be imposed. If the Certification Council makes a determination that a violation has occurred, this determination and the imposition of a sanction are promulgated by written notice to the certificant, and to the individual submitting the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain in confidence whatever portion of the information is not made public by the Certification Council.

In certain circumstances, the Certification Council may consider a recommendation from the Review Committee that the certificant who has violated the certification program policies should be offered an opportunity to submit a written assurance that the conduct in question has been terminated and will not recur. The decision of the Review Committee to make such a recommendation and of the Certification Council to accept it are within their respective discretionary powers. If such an offer is extended, the certificant at issue must submit the required written assurance within thirty (30) days of receipt of the offer, and the assurance must be submitted in terms that are acceptable to the Certification Council. If the Certification Council accepts the assurance, notice is given to the certificant's employer and to the submitter of the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain the information in confidence.

Sanctions

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed by the Certification Council upon a certificant whom the Certification Council has determined to have violated the policies of its certification program(s), although the sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the violation, focusing on reformation of the conduct of the member and deterrence of similar conduct by others:

- written reprimand to the certificant;
- completion of additional continuing education activities;
- suspension of the certificant for a designated period; or
- termination of the certificant's credential.

Verification of this information will be made available only after any appeal has either been considered or the appeal period has passed.

Reprimand in the form of a written notice from the Certification Council normally is sent to a certificant who has received his or her first substantiated complaint. Suspension normally is imposed on a certificant who has received two substantiated complaints. Termination normally is imposed on a certificant who has received two substantiated complaints within a two-year period, or three or more substantiated complaints. The Certification Council may at its discretion, however, impose any of the sanctions, if warranted, in specific cases.

Certificants who have been terminated will have their certification revoked and may not be considered for AFCPE certification in the future. If certification is revoked, any and all certificates/diplomas or other materials requested by the Certification Council must be returned promptly to AFCPE.

Appeal

Within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of a determination by the Certification Council that a certificant violated the certification program policies and/or rules, the affected certificant may submit to the Certification Council in writing a request for an appeal.

Upon receipt of a request for appeal, the Certification Council establishes an appellate body consisting of at least three, but not more than five individuals. This Appeals Committee may review one or more appeals, upon request of the Certification Council. No current members of the Review Committee or the Certification Council may serve on the Appeals Committee; further, no one with any personal involvement or conflict of interest may serve on the Appeals Committee. Members of the Appeals Committee may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the activities of the Committee.

The Appeals Committee may only review whether the determination by the Certification Council of a violation of the certification program policies and/or rules was inappropriate because of:

- material errors of fact, or
- failure of the Review Committee or the Certification Council to conform to published criteria, policies, or procedures.

Only facts and conditions up to and including the time of the Certification Council's determination as represented by facts known to the Certification Council are considered during an appeal. The appeal will not include a hearing or any similar trial-type proceeding. Legal counsel is not expected to participate in the appeal process, unless requested by the appellant and approved by the Certification Council and the Appeals Committee. The Certification Council and Appeals Committee may consult legal counsel.

The Appeals Committee conducts and completes the appeal within ninety (90) days after receipt of the request for an appeal. Written appellate submissions and any reply submissions may be made by authorized representatives of the member and of the Certification Council. Submissions are made according to whatever schedule is reasonably established by the Appeals Committee. The decision of the Appeals Committee either affirms or overrules the determination of the Certification Council but does not address a sanction imposed by the Certification Council. The decision of the Appeals Committee, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, is reported to the Certification Council.

The Appeals Committee decision is binding upon the Certification Council, the certificant who is subject to the termination, and all other persons.

Resignation

If a certificant who is the subject of a complaint voluntarily surrenders his or her certification(s) at any time during the pendency of a complaint under these Procedures, the complaint is dismissed without any further action by the Review Committee, the Certification Council, or an Appeals Committee established after an appeal. The entire record is sealed, and the individual may not reapply for certification. However, the Certification Council may authorize to communicate the fact and date of resignation, and the fact and general nature of the complaint, which was pending at the time of the resignation, to or at the request of a government entity engaged in the administration of law. Similarly, in the event of such resignation, the certificant's employer and the person or entity who submitted the complaint are notified of the fact and date of resignation and that the Certification Council has dismissed the complaint as a result.

Section 7: AFCPE Certification Council Policies

Counselor Code of Ethics

Counselors certified by AFCPE® pledge to maintain the following ethical standards:

- Conduct myself in a credible manner, striving for excellence in providing services with competency, diligence, promptness, and care to the best of my ability.
- Grow in professional practices by keeping abreast of industry developments and striving to improve my professional competency through continuing education.
- Exhibit personal and professional honesty and integrity in advising and counseling clients.
- Recognize my limitations and refer clients when appropriate.
- Maintain high standards of ethical conduct according to the objectives of the institution with which I am affiliated.
- Respect the privacy of clients and the confidentiality of the client-counselor relationship in all matters pertaining to the course of professional service, revealing client information of any kind to others only with the expressed, informed consent of the client.
- Accept compensation that is fair and reasonable, and assist clients in finding other services if my fees are not affordable.
- Avoid any act or omission that violates relevant federal criminal laws, those of any State of the United States or of any province, territory or jurisdiction of any other country.
- Report any felony related to the practice of the profession or which brings disrepute to the profession or any lesser crime which involves misrepresentation, fraud, extortion, misappropriation or theft or any conspiracy to commit such a crime to the AFCPE® Certification Council.
- Report any professional suspension by a governmental or industry self-regulatory authority of a license.

- Make no false or misleading statements to the Executive Board of AFCPE®, its Certification Council or its Professional Review Board.
- Respond in a timely fashion to all requests of the Executive Board of AFCPE®, its Certification Council or its Review Board.

Accommodations for Those with Disabilities

Refer to the Special Accommodations section of this Handbook for instructions regarding special accommodation requests. AFCPE is committed to compliance with the ADA and to providing accommodations to persons with disabilities when the accommodation is reasonable and does not compromise the validity and reliability of the examination. Persons denied accommodation due to a determination that the request is unreasonable or will compromise the validity and reliability of the examination may appeal by submitting a written request for reconsideration to the Certification Council.

Confidentiality

The Certification Council is committed to protecting confidential and/or proprietary information related to applicants; candidates; certificants; and the examination development, maintenance, and administration process.

AFCPE will not release information regarding an individual's application status, personal information or examination results unless release of the information is authorized in writing by the individual or is required by law.

Examination results are released only to the examination candidate unless a signed release is provided in writing by the individual or is required by law. An individual's application status is considered confidential and will only be released if requested by the individual via a signed release form.

Verification

An individual's certification status is not considered confidential. AFCPE will provide confirmation of certification status to anyone who requests the information. Verification of certification status will include the individual's name, current certification status, expiration date, and credential(s). This information may also be published by AFCPE.

AFCPE uses an online search tool for verification purposes. For the public to accurately determine an individual's certification status, AFCPE lists AFC® professionals, former AFC® professionals, and AFC®

candidates in the online search tool. Individuals are listed as either “certified” or “not certified.” Individuals may not opt out of the search tool.

Aggregate Data

Aggregate exam statistics (including the number of exam candidates, pass/fail rates, and a total number of certificants) is published by the AFCPE. Aggregate exam statistics, studies, and reports concerning applicants/certificants will contain no information identifiable with any individual applicant/certificant.

Use of Certification Mark

AFCPE’s certification marks represent the highest standards of excellence in the field of financial counseling and are valuable assets of AFCPE. Professionals authorized by AFCPE to use its certification marks benefit from both our long history of high ethical and educational standards and the public recognition of AFCPE’s certification marks as symbols of professional accomplishment.

Proper Use of Credentials

Candidates who complete their AFC® candidacy will receive a certificate specifying that the AFC® designation has been awarded; official certificates will be sent electronically within 21 business days following completion of all certification requirements. The candidate’s name will appear on the certificate exactly as requested on the application.

AFC®

- Always use capital letters.
- Use the superscript ® (®) symbol on the first occurrence.
- Can be used alone, or with one of the AFCPE-approved nouns: "program," "certificant," "professional," "practitioner," "certification," "mark" or "exam."