



National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) Guidance Document: Quantifying Panel Targets

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NCCA Guidance: Quantifying Panel Targets

For the purposes of compliance with NCCA Standard 13: Panel Composition, certification programs must document panel responsibilities and recruitment processes and define the relevant panel demographic and professional characteristics that support panel composition targets. Documenting those targets is also a requirement under this standard. In addition, the standard requires certification programs to determine which demographic and professional characteristics are essential to target when assembling each panel, considering the roles and responsibilities entrusted to the panel. Panel roles and responsibilities should be documented in program policies and procedures. This additional guidance regarding Essential Element C is provided to clarify what is expected with respect to setting targets for panel composition, including providing examples of adequate documentation formats.

Guidance for Meeting the Standard

Panel composition should be defined based on the function of the panel, keeping in mind the distribution of professional and demographic factors underlying designation holders. Factors such as credentials held, years of experience, areas of practice, and geographic regions (as examples) may be considered essential by the sponsoring organization as panel criteria and targets are defined. Standard 13, Essential Element C requires quantitative targets for such factors. Quantifying panel composition targets may be accomplished in numerous ways. It is not necessary to specify an exact number. A reasonable range could be specified, and/or minimums and maximums may be employed. Stating that the panel will be representative of the certified population of professionals is not sufficient.

Essential Element C of Standard 13 specifies that “The program must define the relevant demographic and professional characteristics of panelists and the target composition of each panel. Each panel must represent the relevant characteristics of the population to be certified as the program defines them.” To clarify, this Essential Element does not call for any certification program to establish race-based quotas for their panels, nor to select SMEs based on race, or engage in any other practices that may violate applicable antidiscrimination laws. A certification program can demonstrate compliance with this Element with regards to demographic characteristics of panelists by documenting efforts made to recruit SMEs who are from demographic groups that represent the demographic characteristics of the population to be certified, to the extent consistent with applicable law.

To comply with Standard 13, programs should address the following aspects:

- 1) Define which characteristics are relevant to the targeted population (e.g., Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) should represent X,Y, and/or Z working environments), include



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relevant and diverse demographic characteristics such as those mentioned in the [NCCA Standards \(2021\)](#);

- 2) Document how these characteristics are represented in the certified population (e.g., X% of certificants work in environment X, Y% - in environment Y, and Z% in environment Z);
- 3) Assign targets that your program deems appropriate for a specific panel (e.g., at least 1 SME from each of the X, Y, and Z working environments defined, or no more than X% from the same working environment). This should include a minimum number of SMEs for each panel to support a defensible process and the target number of SMEs on the panel.

Example Target Statements

The following examples are provided for illustrative purposes only and do not represent an exhaustive list of options. Any quantification included is purely for illustrative purposes and should not be construed as definitive or prescriptive. Here are a few examples of how components may be phrased:

- No less than X% new practitioners (certified < 3 years)
- No more than X number of advanced/tenured practitioners (certified > 10 years)
- No less than X% practitioners working in Y environment
- Approximately X% of a specific gender identity
- At least X number of panelists from each key identified geographic region

References:

[NCCA Standards \(2021\)](#)

Standard 13, Essential Element C:

The program must define the relevant demographic and professional characteristics of panelists and the target composition of each panel. Each panel must represent the relevant characteristics of the population to be certified as the program defines them.

Standard 13, Commentary 1:

A panel refers to people working collectively or individually on tasks for a certification program; panels may be known by other names, such as committee, team, council, commission, or group. Most SMEs should be certified in the discipline and/or actively practicing; however, individuals who are qualified in other disciplines may serve as



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panelists. SMEs' levels of experience and knowledge should be congruent with the activity in which they are engaged and may therefore include some newly certified individuals. Panelists may also include supervisors, faculty, and regulators. Consideration should be given to diversity of demographic characteristics, including but not limited to geographic location, race/ethnicity, and gender.

[NCCA SME Demographic & Activity Template](#): This template can be one way to validate how the panel target was actualized. It is not a replacement for the target itself.