



## Healthcare Ethics Consultant Certified (HEC-C) Examination Candidate Handbook

### **Important dates**

Application deadline: March 10, 2019

Final application deadline (with late fee): March 25, 2019

Testing window: May 1-31, 2019

Examination scores expected to be available: June 15, 2019

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
DEFINITION OF HEALTHCARE ETHICS CONSULTATION .....	3
PATH TO CERTIFICATION .....	3
ABOUT THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM.....	4
VALUE OF CERTIFICATION .....	4
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.....	5
EXAMINATION FEES.....	5
<b>Examination Dates and Application Deadlines.....</b>	<b>5</b>
EXAMINATION DATES .....	5
APPLICATION DEADLINES .....	5
LATE APPLICATIONS.....	5
<b>Application Process .....</b>	<b>6</b>
AUDITS.....	6
REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS.....	7
<b>Examination Scheduling.....</b>	<b>8</b>
HOW TO SCHEDULE THE EXAMINATION .....	8
RESCHEDULING A TESTING APPOINTMENT .....	8
CANCELLING A TESTING APPOINTMENT .....	8
TRANSFERRING TESTING WINDOWS (you have already scheduled a testing appointment) .....	9
NO SHOW/MISSED TESTING APPOINTMENT .....	9
WITHDRAWING YOUR APPLICATION .....	9
<b>Castle Worldwide Testing Centers.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Examination Day .....</b>	<b>9</b>
ARRIVING AT THE TEST CENTER .....	9
DISQUALIFICATION .....	10
EXAMINATION RULES .....	10
EXAMINATION RETAKES.....	10
<b>After the Examination.....</b>	<b>10</b>
EXAMINATION SCORING .....	10
SCALED SCORES .....	11
DIAGNOSTIC REPORTING .....	11
COMPARATIVE REVIEW .....	12
DESIGNATION AND CERTIFICATE .....	12
CERTIFICATION RENEWAL.....	12
CERTIFICATION DENIAL OR REVOCATION.....	13
<b>Examination Information.....</b>	<b>13</b>
EXAMINATION FORMAT .....	13
EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT.....	13
HEC-C CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE .....	14
CORE REFERENCES .....	16

This handbook contains the information you will need to apply for the HEC-C examination as well as policies and procedures governing the program. Candidates are **STRONGLY** encouraged to review this information prior to applying for the examination.

Information in this handbook may be time-sensitive and subject to change. Please visit [www.asbh.org](http://www.asbh.org) to view the most recent candidate handbook.

## **Introduction**

### **DEFINITION OF HEALTHCARE ETHICS CONSULTATION**

Healthcare ethics consultation is a set of services provided by an individual or group in response to questions from patients, families, surrogates, healthcare professionals, or other involved parties who seek to resolve uncertainty or conflict regarding value-laden concerns that emerge in health care. Although all healthcare professionals engage in ethical decision making as part of their everyday practice (e.g., in facilitating informed consent with a patient or family before a procedure), healthcare ethics consultants differ from other healthcare professionals in that they have been assigned by their institutions the distinctive role of responding to specific ethical concerns and questions that arise in the delivery of health care, and therefore require a distinctive set of competencies to perform this role effectively. Healthcare ethics consultation is often performed in conjunction with other healthcare ethics activities, such as educating healthcare professionals, developing organizational policies, serving on organizational committees, and producing scholarly work. (ASBH, 2011)

Healthcare ethics consultations take place in a variety of settings including academic medical centers, ambulatory care facilities, behavioral health facilities, community hospitals, community hospitals affiliated with a medical school, government facilities, health systems, home care, hospice, and long-term care.

Potential roles include administrator, associate professor, assistant professor, clinical ethicist, consultant, department director, director, lecturer, medical director, professor, and researcher.

### **PATH TO CERTIFICATION**

The American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) is a nonprofit organization of healthcare professionals, teachers, consultants, and others with an interest in clinical and academic bioethics and the health-related humanities.

ASBH was founded in January 1998 through the consolidation of three existing associations in the field: the Society for Health and Human Values (SHHV), the Society for Bioethics Consultation (SBC), and the American Association of Bioethics (AAB). The purpose of ASBH is to promote the exchange of ideas and foster multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and interprofessional scholarship, research, teaching, policy development, professional development, and collegiality among people engaged in clinical and academic bioethics and the health-related humanities.

As the practice of healthcare ethics consulting has grown, ASBH has identified the need to develop recognized standards to promote professionalism and excellence within the specialty. Certification is a means by which an individual may demonstrate his or her commitment to professionalism and document his or her qualifications, skill, and knowledge in providing healthcare ethics consultation services to patients and families who seek to resolve uncertainty or conflict regarding value-laden concerns that emerge in health care.

## **ABOUT THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

Professional certification is a voluntary process by which an individual's performance is evaluated against predetermined standards for knowledge, skills, and/or competencies. Participants who demonstrate that they meet the standards by successfully completing the assessment process are granted a time-limited credential. To retain the credential, certificants must maintain continued competence. The credential awarded by the certification program provider denotes that the participant possesses specialized knowledge, skills, or competencies. (Institute of Credentialing Excellence, 2010)

The Healthcare Ethics Consultant Certified (HEC-C) program is administered by the Healthcare Ethics Consultant (HCEC) Certification Commission ("the Commission"). Formed in 2017, the Commission is a functionally autonomous component of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH). The purpose of the certification program is to promote excellence and professionalism within the practice of healthcare ethics consultation by assessing individual performance against a predetermined standard of knowledge and skill. The Commission establishes eligibility requirements for the HEC-C examination and all other policies for the certification program.

The Commission may be contacted at

HCEC Certification Commission  
8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60631  
cert@asbh.org  
847.375.4745

The Commission is made up of seven members representing diverse backgrounds, practice setting, and training/education in the field of healthcare ethics consulting and includes one non-consultant member representing the public.

The Commission contracted with Castle Worldwide, Inc. to develop the HEC-C examination. Castle Worldwide is a full-service testing company providing licensure, certification, and specialty examinations, including practical and written simulation tests, for associations, state boards, government agencies, and corporations. Castle Worldwide, Inc. works with the Commission to develop, administer, and score the HEC-C examination. Candidates communicate with Castle to schedule a date to take the HEC-C examination.

The certification program is an element in the professional structure of healthcare ethics consultation, along with the Code of Conduct and the Core Competencies among other elements, to help assess, assure, and improve the quality of healthcare ethics consultation. All of these elements ideally support each other. The certification process aims to promote excellence and professionalism within the field of healthcare ethics consultation. Specifically, the certification process assesses individual performance as measured against a predetermined standard of knowledge and skill. To this end, the Commission, in conjunction with testing experts and experienced healthcare ethics consultants, have developed a legally defensible, reliable, and valid certification examination.

## **VALUE OF CERTIFICATION**

HEC-C program validates a candidate's knowledge and skills in assessing factual information about medical ethics concerns, analyzing the ethical questions at hand to resolve issues and conflicts, using consistent processes that adhere to healthcare ethics competencies, and evaluating the outcomes and implications of healthcare ethics consultations.

Using thorough and standardized evaluation criteria, the HEC-C credential is a credible endorsement of a candidate's core knowledge and skills in clinical healthcare ethics consulting. The certification process is led by an expert commission of HECs and aims to further legitimize the essential work of the healthcare ethics consultant.

The HEC-C credential affirms an individual's role as an essential patient care provider with unique experience and acquired skill at addressing ethical issues for patients and their families.

Patients and their families, as well as other healthcare professionals, rely on the healthcare ethics consultant expertise to resolve difficult ethical concerns that arise during treatment. The HEC-C credential recognizes an individual's experience in patient and family advocacy by emphasizing high standards of practice within an institution and in the healthcare ethics consulting field.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Candidates for the HEC-C examination must meet the following eligibility criteria at the time of application:

- a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree; and
- 400 hours of clinical ethics experience, related to the major domains of the content outline, within the previous 4 years.

The Commission accepts eligible candidates regardless of age, sex, race, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or national origin.

### **EXAMINATION FEES**

ASBH members: \$450

Non-member: \$650

Late fee: \$100 (applies to applications submitted after the first deadline but on or before the final deadline)

All fees are subject to change and current fees are posted at [www.asbh.org](http://www.asbh.org). ASBH members are eligible for a reduced examination fee. **Please note: ASBH membership must be current at the time of application in order to receive the reduced examination fee for ASBH members. ASBH membership is not required to take the HEC-C examination.**

## **Examination Dates and Application Deadlines**

### **EXAMINATION DATES**

The HEC-C examination is administered during a month-long test window between May 1-31, 2019. **It is not possible to schedule or reschedule testing appointment outside of the testing window.**

### **APPLICATION DEADLINES**

Applications are accepted throughout the year; however, applications must be submitted no less than 50 days prior to the start of the testing window. This means that the application deadline date for the May testing window is March 10, 2019.

### **LATE APPLICATIONS**

Late applications are accepted for 15 days following the deadline for each window. (March 11 – March 25, for the May testing window.) Candidates applying late will be assessed a \$100

late fee in addition to the examination fee. Be aware that candidates applying late may not receive their first choices of testing dates, locations, and/or times.

## Application Process

You may apply for the examination via an online application portal. The application may be accessed from the ASHB website at [www.asbh.org](http://www.asbh.org). Membership is not required to take the certification examination; however, you will need an ASBH online account to submit the application and pay the examination fee. If you are a current ASBH member or have been a member in the past; have attended an ASBH annual conference; or have purchased any product or education program from ASBH, you already have an ASBH account. If you do not recall your user name and password, please call 847.375.4745 for help resetting your user name and password. If you do not have an account, you may establish one at the time of application.

### Completing the application

1. *Review the candidate handbook prior to completing the application.* Follow the instructions given, and address any questions to the HCEC at 847.375.4745 or [cert@asbh.org](mailto:cert@asbh.org). Failure to follow the instructions can lead to the denial of an application.
2. *Review the eligibility requirements.* DO NOT submit an application before you have satisfied all eligibility requirements.
3. *Download the application.* The application is available in a pdf format at [www.asbh.org](http://www.asbh.org). Please download the application, complete it electronically, and save it.
4. *Upload the application and complete the payment.*
  - A. Once you have completed the application, go to [www.asbh.org](http://www.asbh.org) and access your account ("My Account") from the membership menu.
  - B. Once you have accessed your account, click on Certification Application (left-side menu), then click on the button "add a new document" to upload the application
  - C. Click on "Pay Now" to complete the payment.

### **The application is not considered complete until the payment is received.**

5. *Receive the Notice to Schedule.* You will receive the notice to schedule (NTS) your examination via email. For those who apply by the first deadline, the NTS will be sent beginning March 18. For those who apply by the second deadline, the NTS will be sent beginning April 3. During the time you expect to receive email correspondence from Castle Worldwide, please be aware that some email programs have spam filters that may intercept email from an unknown address. To prevent this from occurring, please add [testing@castleworldwide.com](mailto:testing@castleworldwide.com) to your list of acceptable addresses.

6. *When you receive the notice to schedule an examination date, please select a date for the examination.*

### AUDITS

In order to maintain the integrity of the program and verify the accuracy of the information submitted by candidates, a percentage of applications during each testing window will be randomly selected for audit. The Commission may select additional applications for audit at its discretion.

If the audit is not completed prior to the examination date, the candidate will be permitted to take the examination; however, the results will be voided if the candidate does not complete or fails the audit.

If a candidate fails the audit, fails to respond satisfactorily to the receipt of the audit notification, or refuses to submit to an audit, he or she will forfeit all fees. If the candidate applies for the examination in the future, the candidate must complete the audit prior to taking the examination.

If selected for audit, you will be notified by email and given 15 days from the receipt of the email to respond. If you do not respond to the email, staff will contact you via a traceable delivery service. Staff will make three attempts at contact before the audit is considered failed.

Auditees will be asked to provide an official transcript, including the degree awarded. Concurrently, staff will contact the auditee's supervisor or other colleague to affirm that the candidate has completed a minimum of 400 hours of healthcare ethics consulting within the previous four years.

### **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Commission complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12101 *et seq.*) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. §2000e *et seq.*) in providing reasonable accommodations to take the examination to individuals who need them.

Reasonable accommodations provide candidates with disabilities a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in the essential functions being measured by the examination. Reasonable accommodations are approved or denied based upon the individual's specific request, disability, documentation submitted, and appropriateness of the request. Reasonable accommodations do not include steps that fundamentally alter the purpose or nature of the examination, influence the examination results, or result in an undue burden.

Requests for accommodation with supporting documentation must be received by the Commission no less than 45 days prior to the testing date. Supporting documentation may include 1) a letter (on the professional's letterhead) from an appropriate licensed professional or certified specialist who diagnosed the disability and is recommending reasonable accommodations; 2) evidence of receiving accommodations during school on the school's letterhead; or 3) an individualized education plan (IEP). The confidentiality of all documentation submitted by the disabled candidate is protected. The documentation must include the candidate's name and address; the diagnosis of the disability; and specific recommendations for accommodation.

All requests will be reviewed by Commission staff in consultation with testing company staff and other appropriate parties, who will determine whether to approve or deny the request. The candidate will be notified of the decision and approval of the reasonable accommodation will be forwarded to the testing company. The testing company will work directly with the candidate in making the arrangements. The Commission is responsible for expenses related to the provision of reasonable accommodations.

# Examination Scheduling

## HOW TO SCHEDULE THE EXAMINATION

The examination scheduling process will begin approximately 45 days prior to the start of the examination window. A notice to schedule the examination will be sent to the email address on file with ASBH. **It is very important that you check your email for the notice.** This notice will contain a link to the scheduling website as well as a user name and password. It is your responsibility to schedule an examination date. Once you submit your scheduling request, you will receive a confirmation notice within 48 hours. You must print the confirmation notice and bring it with you to the testing center. It is your responsibility to call Castle Worldwide at 919.572.6880 if you do not receive the Notice to Schedule email for your examination.

Once you submit a complete application, you should schedule the examination for the next available testing window. If you submit an application but find that you are unable to schedule an examination date during the next available testing window, you may transfer the application to the following testing window **Please note: the application may be transferred only once to the next testing window.** If you do not take the examination during the next available testing window, your application will be closed and the examination fee will be forfeited. Candidates must then update and resubmit all application materials and examination payment if they choose to pursue certification.

## RESCHEDULING A TESTING APPOINTMENT

You may reschedule a testing appointment **up to 4 business days prior** to your testing appointment. (Please see the table below.) To reschedule, follow the link you received in the original "notice to schedule" email. (This is the link you used to schedule your original test date.) You will be required to pay a \$50 non-refundable administrative fee directly to Castle when signing into the scheduling system to reschedule your test. **Please note: Testing appointments may not be rescheduled less than 4 business days in advance of the testing appointment.**

<b>Day of testing appointment:</b>	<b>Must reschedule/cancel by:</b>
Monday	Tuesday of the previous week
Tuesday	Wednesday of the previous week
Wednesday	Thursday of the previous week
Thursday	Friday of the previous week
Friday	Monday of the current week
Saturday	Tuesday of the current week

Not appearing for your testing appointment or rescheduling your examination fewer than four (4) business days before your testing appointment will count as your original testing appointment. You will be marked as a no-show candidate and your entire examination fee will be forfeited.

## CANCELLING A TESTING APPOINTMENT

Scheduled testing appointments may be cancelled **up to 4 business days prior** to the testing appointment. (Please refer to the table above.) This will need to be completed by logging into your original "notice to schedule" email. You will be required to pay a \$50 non-refundable administrative fee directly to Castle when signing into the scheduling system to cancel your appointment. **Testing appointments may not be cancelled less than 4 business days in advance of the testing appointment.**



### **TRANSFERRING TESTING WINDOWS (you have already scheduled a testing appointment)**

You may reschedule your scheduled appointment **up to four (4) business days prior** to the testing appointment. Rescheduling requests are not accepted within four (4) business days of your scheduled testing appointment. The reschedule request must be submitted through Castle's online scheduling system; please log into your original "Notice to Schedule" email. You will be required to pay a \$50 non-refundable administrative fee directly to Castle online at the time of the request. If eligible, candidates may transfer only to the next available testing window. To complete the transfer to the next testing window, please reply to your "Notice to Schedule" email notifying Castle of your request to transferring/postponing. **Please note: the application may be transferred only once.** If you fail to schedule and take the examination during the next available testing window, your application will be closed and the examination fee will be forfeited.

### **NO SHOW/MISSED TESTING APPOINTMENT**

If you fail to appear for your testing appointment, and have not contacted Castle to cancel or reschedule within at least four business days of the testing appointment, you will be considered a "no show" and you will forfeit the examination fee.

### **WITHDRAWING YOUR APPLICATION**

To withdraw your application, you must:

1. Submit a written request (email is sufficient) directly to the Commission, notifying us of your decision to withdraw your application. You may send the request to [cert@asbh.org](mailto:cert@asbh.org).
2. Log into the Notice to Schedule to cancel any scheduled testing appointment and pay the \$50 non-refundable cancellation fee to the testing company. Please follow the instructions above-"Cancelling a Testing Appointment." **Testing appointments may not be cancelled less than 4 business days in advance of the testing appointment.**

The Commission will refund the candidate's examination fees minus a \$100 administrative fee. This fee is in addition to any non-refundable fees paid directly to Castle. Any outstanding fees must be paid before a refund request will be processed. If you fail to cancel the testing appointment, you will be considered a no-show and you will forfeit the examination fee. Refunds will not be processed until after the close of the testing window.

## **Castle Worldwide Testing Centers**

Each testing center maintains its own schedule, based on overall demand and scheduling constraints. Some centers have a limited schedule or limited seating. Testing appointments are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Castle Worldwide account managers will be available on Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm EST to handle telephone, facsimile, and electronic mail requests from candidates, as well as to answer questions about testing centers. Castle Worldwide's voice mail system will accept calls outside of these business hours.

## **Examination Day**

### **ARRIVING AT THE TEST CENTER**

You must take the HEC-C examination during the testing appointment that was scheduled following the approval of your application. If it becomes necessary for Castle Worldwide to change the scheduled examination date, you will be notified of any changes as far in advance of the examination as possible. In the event of an emergency, you must reschedule your testing appointment by contacting Castle Worldwide at 919.572.6880. Exceptions will be made only for substantiated emergencies. Candidates who do not have substantiated

emergencies and who miss their testing appointments must reapply and pay the examination fees again.

Please arrive at the testing site at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the examination. **You must bring your confirmation notice and your photo identification with signature to the examination site when you arrive for your scheduled testing appointment.** Acceptable forms of identification include state-issued driver's licenses and government-issued passports and identification cards. Unacceptable forms of identification include gym memberships, warehouse club memberships, school identification cards, credit cards, and identification with signature only (no photo).

You will have three (3) hours to complete the examination.

***You will not be admitted to the examination once the examination has begun. If you arrive late or not at all, you forfeit your testing appointment and your examination fee.***

## **DISQUALIFICATION**

Any candidate who gives or receives assistance on the examination during the testing appointment will be required to turn in his or her examination materials immediately and leave the testing room. The candidate's examination will not be scored, and the incident will be reported to Castle Worldwide and the Commission for further action.

## **EXAMINATION RULES**

Castle Worldwide follows industry standard testing rules as outlined below.

- No books, papers, or other reference materials may be taken into the testing room. An area will be provided for storage of such materials.
- No electronic devices, including telephones, cameras, signaling devices, pagers, alarms, and recording/playback devices of any kind may be taken into the testing room. An area will be provided for storage of such materials.
- You may not take examination materials, documents, or memoranda of any type from the testing room.
- The examination will be given only on the date and time noted on the examination admission ticket. If an emergency arises, and you are unable to take the examination as scheduled, please call Castle Worldwide at 919.572.6880.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination period. You should listen carefully to the directions given by the proctor and carefully read the directions shown on the computer monitor.

## **EXAMINATION RETAKES**

If you fail the HEC-C examination, you can reapply to take the examination during the next testing window. The reapplication process includes submitting an updated application and paying the examination fees. If your name has changed since you first applied for the HEC-C exam, please include a copy of the legal document showing your name change—marriage license, divorce decree, etc. There is no limit to the number of times you may take the HEC-C examination, provided you continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

# **After the Examination**

## **EXAMINATION SCORING**

Examination scores will be available by June 15, 2019. You will receive an email from Castle with instructions on how to access the score report portal.

Your score report will indicate whether you passed or failed the examination. Passing or failing is based on the number of items you answered correctly, and it is reported as a scaled score indicated on your score report. A scaled score of 500 is needed to pass the HEC-C examination

Score reports will provide information about subscore areas. Subscores represent content from specific areas of the content outline, and these scores are helpful as helpful for self-assessment.

For each section listed on the score report, a subscore is calculated as the number of questions answered correctly. There is no penalty for guessing, and each incorrect or omitted answer is counted as one incorrect response. The total possible number of answers for each section is listed on the score report.

The cut score or passing point used in this examination is determined by a criterion-referenced approach called the Angoff Modified Technique. This technique is currently considered one of the most defensible criterion-referenced methods available for setting passing points. It relies on the pooled judgments of content experts. For example, in this approach, a group of experts is asked to judge each item on the test. The criterion used to judge each item is formed into a question: "What is the probability that a minimally competent candidate will answer this item correctly?" This question prompts the judges to consider a group of minimally competent candidates and what proportion of that group will answer each item correctly.

The average of the proportions, or probabilities, is multiplied by the total number of items on the test. The result then represents the score indicating minimal competence. The final passing score for the examination is based on this pooled judgment and includes a statistical adjustment for measurement error.

### **SCALED SCORES**

Because of the need for security, there are multiple forms of the examination, each containing a different combination of questions. The passing standard cannot be set as a specific raw score, or number of questions answered correctly, because some of these forms may be slightly easier or more difficult than others. Therefore, requiring the same raw score to pass the different forms would not be fair to all examinees. A statistical procedure called equating is used to adjust for any differences in the level of difficulty among examination forms.

Once the examination forms have been equated, a procedure called scaling is used to convert the actual number of correct answers, or raw scores, to a uniform scale. These converted scores are called scaled scores.

### **DIAGNOSTIC REPORTING**

A diagnostic report is a performance report on a particular portion of the certification examination. It breaks down the individual's total score into the areas tested to describe strengths and weaknesses.

You may request a diagnostic report by completing the request for diagnostic reports and/or comparative review form available at [www.castleworldwide.com/forms/](http://www.castleworldwide.com/forms/). Castle Worldwide will prepare a diagnostic report and mail the report to you for a fee of \$50 per report.

## **COMPARATIVE REVIEW**

A comparative review verifies that the candidate's answers were scored against the correct examination answer key in order to confirm the candidate's examination was scored properly. Please note that the Internet-based testing scoring process is very accurate and that the scoring process already includes several quality assurance steps.

You may request a comparative review by completing the request for diagnostic reports and/or comparative review form available at [www.castleworldwide.com/forms/](http://www.castleworldwide.com/forms/). Castle Worldwide will complete a comparative review and mail the report to you for a fee of \$50 a report.

## **DESIGNATION AND CERTIFICATE**

Each candidate who passes the Healthcare Ethics Consultant Certified (HEC-C) examination may use "HEC-C" after his or her name and will receive a certificate from the Commission. Certification is recognized for a period of five (5) years based on the last day of the month the examination was passed and may be renewed by a process determined by the Commission. For example, if you take and pass the certification examination in May 2019, your certification will expire May 31, 2024.

## **CERTIFICATION RENEWAL**

Certification is recognized for a period of five (5) years from the last day of the month in which certification was earned. If certification is not renewed, it expires the last day of the month, five (5) years after certification was initially earned. You will be sent specific instructions, dates, and criteria after you become certified.

In order to renew HEC-C certification, you must meet the eligibility criteria and complete the renewal process established by the Commission. There is a fee to renew HEC-C certification. Two paths to recertification will be available as follows.

1. Demonstration of a minimum amount of clinical ethics experience related to the major domains of the content outline, within a set time period; and participation in a minimum number of professional development activity hours.

OR

2. Renewal by examination; candidates must meet examination eligibility criteria at time of application.

It is your responsibility to keep the board updated on name or address changes. Contact the Commission at

**HCEC Certification Commission**  
**8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300**  
**Chicago, IL 60631-2738**  
**847.375.4745**  
**info@asbh.org**

It is your responsibility to obtain the application materials for certification renewal. There are no exceptions to the deadline for renewal based on failure to receive application materials.

## **CERTIFICATION DENIAL OR REVOCATION**

Applications for certification may be denied or certification revoked for any of the following reasons:

1. Failure to submit a completed application by the deadline
2. Failure to supply additional requested information by the established deadline
3. Falsification of application materials
4. Misrepresentation by a candidate
5. Misuse of the HEC-C credential

A reconsideration and appeal procedure is available to individual applicants for certification who wish to contest an adverse decision made by the Commission. This is a two-step process and all requests must go through reconsideration prior to appeal. An applicant who does not file a request for reconsideration within the required time limit shall waive the right to reconsideration and appeal.

There are limitations to the right of reconsideration or appeal. The candidate does not have the right to challenge the following

1. A to challenge what constitutes a passing point set by the Commission.
2. A candidate's failure to submit a completed application by the published deadline.
3. A candidate's failure to comply with the audit requirements.

Any expenses incurred by the applicant for appeal shall be the responsibility of the individual applicant, even in the event that the appeal is successful and certification is earned/reinstated.

## **Examination Information**

### **EXAMINATION FORMAT**

The HEC-C examination is in English. It is a multiple-choice examination consisting of stand-alone questions and scenarios with related questions. The examination is administered electronically on a computer; however, no specific knowledge of computers and/or typing is required. You will have three (3) hours to complete the examination. The certification examination consists of 100 scored, multiple-choice questions and 10 multiple choice unscored questions for a total of 110 questions.

The unscored questions are not counted in the scoring of the examination. They are distributed among the other scored questions and will be used for statistical purposes only. Since the unscored questions are similar to the scored questions on the examination and since you will not know which questions are scored and which are not, you should answer all examination questions.

It is advisable to answer first those questions that are easy for you, skipping those questions that are more difficult and to which you can return later to give more thought. You should try to answer all the questions; there is no penalty for guessing.

### **EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT**

The development of a valid, written, multiple-choice examination for the HEC-C program began with a clear and concise definition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for competent performance. Using interviews, surveys, observation, and group discussions, the Commission worked with healthcare ethics consultants to delineate critical job components. The knowledge and skill bases for the questions on the HEC-C examination were derived from the actual practice of healthcare ethics consultants as outlined in the HEC-C role delineation study.

The results of the role delineation study were used to develop the content outline for the examination. The content outline serves as a guide to what candidates can expect to see on the examination and is an invaluable resource in preparing for the examination. The content is divided into four domains: assessment; analysis; process; and evaluation and quality improvement, with supporting tasks for each. The role delineation study also identified 63 “knowledge statements” that are included as part of the content outline and represent foundational knowledge that will be tested in the examination. Each examination question will link back to a task and knowledge statement included in the content outline. The distribution of questions across the four domains is indicated by the percentage after each heading.

## **HEC-C CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE**

### **1) Assessment (32%)**

- A) Gather and discern factual information relevant to the case (e.g., clinical, psychosocial, spiritual, institutional, legal)
- B) Assess the social and interpersonal dynamics of those involved in the consultation (e.g., power relations, racial, ethnic, cultural)
- C) Distinguish the ethical dimensions of the consultation from other dimensions (e.g., legal, institutional, medical)
- D) Elicit the moral views of those involved in the consultation
- E) Identify relevant assumptions, beliefs, values, and interests of those involved
- F) Identify the ethical concern(s) and the central ethical question(s)
- G) Identify your own relevant experiences, values, and intuitions and how these might influence the consultation

### **2) Analysis (28%)**

- A) Evaluate and apply relevant health care ethics information (e.g., law, institutional policy, professional codes and formal guidance)
- B) Clarify relevant ethical issues (e.g., confidentiality, privacy, informed consent, best interest, professional duties)
- C) Identify a range of ethically acceptable options and their consequences
- D) Evaluate evidence and arguments for and against different options
- E) Offer recommendations

### **3) Process (27%)**

- A) Create a respectful and trusting environment
- B) Promote respect for diversity
- C) Establish realistic expectations about the consultation process
- D) Determine whether a particular request will involve only the healthcare ethics consultant service or is appropriate for joint effort
- E) Facilitate effective communication among all parties
- F) Identify who should be involved in a consultation (e.g., patient, healthcare professionals, family members)
- G) Collaborate with other responsible persons, departments, or divisions within the institution
- H) Facilitate formal meetings (e.g., clarifying participants' roles, identifying the goal, establishing expectations and confidentiality)
- I) Educate involved parties about the ethical dimensions of the consultation
- J) Recognize and attend to relational barriers to communication (e.g., suffering, moral distress, strong emotions)
- K) Represent the views of the involved parties to others
- L) Identify underlying systems issues and bring them to the attention of the appropriate institutional resource for handling such concerns at the appropriate level
- M) Document consultations in internal healthcare ethics consultation service records

- N) Document consultations in patient health records
- O) Summarize and communicate documentation to relevant parties
- P) Identify the need for and establish the timeline for and complete follow-up activities
- Q) Provide informal guidance or sounding-board (e.g., "curbside" consultation)
- R) Use institutional structures and resources to facilitate implementation of recommendations

**4) Evaluation and Quality Improvement (13%)**

- A) Obtain feedback from persons involved in ethics consultations
- B) Use criteria to evaluate ethics consultation outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, conflict resolution, knowledge acquisition)
- C) Ensure systematic recording of ethics consultation data
- D) Use data to analyze structural or systemic barriers to effective consultation process
- E) Use data to analyze structural or systemic obstacles to excellent care that may have contributed to the need for the consultation
- F) Identify patterns (e.g., frequently repeated consultations about the same issue, or from the same unit or department)
- G) Consider the implications of outcomes of consultations for the wider organization, including its mission and ethical standards
- H) Recommend policy and practice changes within the organization

The following knowledge statements may be incorporated into the above domains and tasks.

**Moral Reasoning**

- 1. Approaches to moral reasoning (e.g., theories, methods, concepts)

**Healthcare Ethics, Issues, and Concepts**

- 2. Advance care planning
- 3. Autonomy, informed consent, and refusal
- 4. Beginning-of-life decision making
- 5. Common barriers to "patient adherence"
- 6. Confidentiality and privacy
- 7. Conflicts of interest and of obligation
- 8. Decision-making capacity
- 9. Determination of death
- 10. Difficult-to-care-for patients and surrogates
- 11. Disclosure and truth telling
- 12. Disruptive or impaired providers
- 13. Duty to warn
- 14. End-of-life decision making
- 15. Genetic testing and counseling
- 16. Life-sustaining treatment
- 17. Moral distress
- 18. Organ donation and transplantation
- 19. Palliative care and pain management
- 20. Parental permission, decision making, and assent for children and adolescents
- 21. Patients' rights and responsibilities
- 22. Potentially inappropriate treatment/futility
- 23. Professional codes of ethics and guidance documents
- 24. Professionals' rights and responsibilities (and conscientious objection to treatment)
- 25. Public health issues
- 26. Reproductive issues
- 27. Resource allocation
- 28. Shared decision making

29. Social determinants of health
30. Staff and patient safety
31. Surrogate decision making, substituted judgment and best interest standards
32. Vulnerable populations

### **Healthcare Systems**

33. Continuum of care delivery
34. Delivery and payment systems
35. Development of health policy
36. Health care organization administration
37. Relevant regulatory and accreditation standards

### **Clinical Context**

38. Basic concepts and processes used in diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis
39. Clinical course of commonly seen illnesses
40. Current and emerging technologies
41. Distinctions between clinical research and therapeutic innovation
42. Factors that influence the process of health care decision making
43. Grieving process and psychological responses to illness and loss
44. Health care professionals and their roles, relationships, and responsibilities
45. How care is provided on various services, settings, and levels of acuity
46. Treatment goals and the related plan of care
47. Understanding how patients or their surrogate decision makers interpret health, disease, and illness

### **Local Healthcare Organizations and Policies**

48. Community beliefs and perspectives that bear on the health care of marginalized groups
49. Decision making processes or frameworks
50. Health care ethics consultant resources and relationships
51. Health care organization policies
52. Local health care facility's code of professional conduct
53. Medical records system
54. Mission, vision, and values
55. Organizational culture
56. Perspectives of those who are physically, developmentally, or behaviorally challenged and their surrogates
57. Range of services, sites of delivery, and populations served
58. Resources for understanding and interpreting cultural and faith communities
59. Structure, including departmental, organizational, governance, and committee structure

### **Health Law**

60. Relevant health law
61. Federal, state, and local statutes and case law
62. Relationship between law and ethics
63. Reporting requirements

### **CORE REFERENCES**

The Commission does not sponsor or endorse any materials or programs for HEC-C certification examination preparation. Candidates are strongly encouraged to review the content outline to determine the best study method based on their individual knowledge and learning style. The references listed below may be helpful in preparing for the examination.

Core Competencies Task Force. (2011). *Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics Consultation* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: American Society of Bioethics and Humanities.



Clinical Ethics Consultation Affairs Committee. (2017). *Addressing Patient-Centered Ethical Issues in Health Care: A Case-Based Study Guide for*. Chicago, IL: American Society of Bioethics and Humanities.

Clinical Ethics Consultation Affairs Committee. (2015). *Improving Competencies in Clinical Ethics Consultation: An Education Guide, 2nd ed.* Chicago, IL: American Society of Bioethics and Humanities.

Applebaum, P. S. (2007). Clinical practice. Assessment of patients' competence to consent to treatment. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 357(18), 1834-1840.

Beauchamp, T., & Childress, J. (2012). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics (7th ed.)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Berlinger, N., Jennings, B., & Wolf, S. (2013). *The Hastings Center Guidelines for Decisions on Life-Sustaining Treatment and Care Near the End of Life*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Diekema, D., Mercurio, M., & Adam M (Eds). (2011). *Clinical Ethics in Pediatrics: A Case-Based Textbook*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Dubler, N., & Liebman, C. (2011). *Bioethics Mediation: A Guide to Shaping Shared Solutions*. Nashville, TN.: Vanderbilt University Press.

Fletcher, J., Lombardo, P., & Spencer, E. (2005). *Fletcher's Introduction to Clinical Ethics (3rd ed.)*. Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group.

Ford, P., & Dudzinski, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Complex Ethics Consultations: Cases That Haunt Us*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hester, DN., & Schonfeld, T. (2012). *Guidance for Healthcare Ethics Committees*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.

Jonsen, A., Siegler, M., & Winslade, W. (2015) *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine (8th ed.)*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Kon AA, Shepard, E. K., Sederstrom, N. O., Swoboda, S. M., Marshall, M. F., Birriel, B., & Rincon, F. (2016). Defining futile and potentially inappropriate interventions: A policy statement from the Society of Critical Care Medicine Ethics Committee. *Critical Care Medicine*, 44(9), 1769-1774. doi: 10.1097/CCM.0000000000001965

Lo, B. (2013). *Resolving Ethical Dilemmas: A Guide for Clinicians (5th ed.)*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.