

TNI Certified Professional Handbook

December 6, 2023

1.0 Introduction

The credentialing initiative is governed by a process in which a certificate documents that the individual is a certified professional. The credential itself may be obtained by 1) having specified education and experience and passing a comprehensive examination or by 2) accumulating a pre-defined collection of digital badges for the certificate. Both approaches would require ongoing professional development hours to maintain the credential.

1.1 Value of Certification

A high-quality certification validates an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a defined profession. Certified individuals reduce risk and enhance consumer protection and public safety and welfare. In addition, these certifications allow employers and other stakeholders to identify individuals with the competencies needed to perform a role or task.

Individuals may benefit from:

- Increased recognition by peers and respect of colleagues in the profession,
- Improved opportunities for employability and advancement,
- Greater confidence in their professional competence,
- Increased professional trust from employers or the public,
- Increased autonomy in the workplace, and
- Better compensation and career longevity.

Employers may benefit from:

- Qualified individuals for employment or advancement,
- Recertification requirements for continued or enhanced competence,
- Commitment to public safety and welfare and/or consumer protection,
- Reduced risk of errors, accidents and/or legal liability,
- Reduced employee turnover and increased job satisfaction, and
- Justification for potential compensation differential.

1.2 About the TNI Credentials Committee

The Credentials Committee is a standing committee of TNI and is empowered by the TNI Board of Directors to provide oversight and governance for the TNI credential initiative and to establish procedures and policies as defined in the Committee Charter. The Committee is solely responsible for all essential decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the credential initiative.

2.0 The Exam and Experience Option

Under this option an individual could become a Certified Professional by demonstrating they meet established minimum requirements for education and experience and passing a comprehensive exam. Training courses would be available to assist with the initial certification but are not required.

2.1 Applying for Certification

2.1.1 Eligibility Requirements

EDUCATION	EXPERIENCE
High School Diploma or G E Diploma	Five years in working in the field, including at least one year in a position related to the credential.
Associate's, in related field*	Four years in working in the field, including at least one year in a position related to the credential.
Bachelor's, in related field*	Three years in working in the field, including at least

	one year in a position related to the credential.
Master's or higher degree in related field*	Two years in working in the field, including at least one year in a position related to the credential.

** In chemistry, environmental sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences, chemical engineering, or equivalent scientific discipline.

Applicants are required to complete and submit the official electronic application, meet established deadlines, pay all fees, and provide information required to demonstrate eligibility for certification.

2.1.2 Submitting an Application

Applicants must apply for the examination online at <https://nelac-institute.org/credential/exam>. If the applicant does not already have a profile in the system, the applicant will be prompted to create one. This information is confidential and will be handled according to TNI's [Privacy Policy](#).

Applicants are required to attest that all of the information provided in the application is complete and truthful. If an applicant has falsified or omitted any material information in the application, sanctions may result, including invalidation of examination score or revocation of certification or eligibility for certification.

TNI staff will review all applications and will directly contact applicants to provide any information identified as missing in the application. Failure to respond by the deadline to a request for more information will result in the applicant's eligibility being denied; in such cases, the examination fee will be refunded, but the application review fee is non-refundable.

2.1.3 Application Due Dates

The exam is offered in two annual testing periods, or windows, one in the Spring/Summer and one in the Fall/Winter that will be posted on the TNI website. Applications must be submitted at least 45 days before the announced exam date.

2.1.4 Fees

Fees are required to be paid in advance at the time of application. The fee, charged as one payment, includes two parts, an application review fee and an examination administration fee. If an applicant is determined not to meet the eligibility requirements, the examination administration portion of the fee will be refunded. The application review portion of the fee is \$75 and is non-refundable.

Examination applications remain valid for 12 months after approval. Once a candidate's application is approved, the individual may test within either of the two testing windows offered within the 12-month time frame. If a candidate fails to achieve a passing score in the first testing window, a retest fee will apply during the second testing window within the 12-month period.

Table 1. Fee Schedule

	TNI Members	Nonmembers
Base fee	\$375	\$500
Retest fee (within 12 months of application approval)	\$250	\$300

2.1.5 Scheduling the Examination

Approximately three weeks before the testing window opens an email will be sent to candidates with instructions on how to schedule their examination. Candidates have approximately one week from the date of the email notification to schedule the examination. This is referred to as the "scheduling window". Once the examination has been scheduled, a confirmation email listing the date and time of the examination will be sent via email. **The email will also contain instructions on how to prepare for a live remote proctoring (LRP) session.** Candidates are encouraged to check their "junk" or "spam" email folders to ensure they receive all email notifications.

Be sure that your computer and the location where you intend to take the examination meet the requirements specified in your confirmation email BEFORE examination day. If they do not meet the requirements, you will not be able to complete the test, and you will not receive a refund.

2.1.6 Cancellation Policy

In the event a candidate cancels the scheduled examination or fails to report at the scheduled time, no fees will be refunded. Candidates whose application is still in active status will have the ability to test during the following testing window (if at least 72 hours' notice is not provided, a cancellation fee may apply, unless the cancellation is due to a documented emergency). TNI may require documentation of the candidate's reason for cancellation.

2.1.7 Rescheduling due to extenuating circumstances

If for a reason beyond the candidate's control, the candidate cannot meet a scheduled examination time, the examination may be rescheduled for another time during the testing window for that examination period, if sufficient notice is provided, availability exists, and verifiable documentation of the extenuating circumstance is provided. To reschedule an examination, please contact credentials.coordinator@nelac-institute.org as soon as possible **before the close of the testing window**.

2.1.8 Content Coverage on the Examination

The examination questions cover the topics detailed in the applicable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities document associated with each credential at <https://nelac-institute.org/credential/ksas>. The examination is offered in English only. Candidates are encouraged to develop a study plan based on review of the content outline.

2.2 Taking the Examination

The examination is only offered in an online live remote proctored (LRP) setting. Be sure that the computer and the location where you intend to take the examination meet the requirements specified in your confirmation email **BEFORE** examination day. If they do not meet the requirements, you will not be able to complete the test and you will not receive a refund. Prior to examination day complete the following steps. **Additional instructions will be provided to applicants in their confirmation email.**

The examination consists of 155 multiple-choice questions. Twenty-five experimental questions are included for possible future inclusion into the operational item bank. These questions are scattered throughout the examination and are not scored. The final score is based on 130 operational questions.

Candidates have three (3) hours to complete the examination. This includes a short break between sections.

At the scheduled examination time, candidates will be prompted to complete a series of computer system checks, download a required application, and then be connected to a proctor.

The proctor will:

- Confirm candidate identification (see Identification Requirements below)
- Direct the candidate to pan the examination room
- Release the examination for the candidate to start testing

2.2.1 Identification requirements

Candidates are required to present a valid government issued photo identification to the proctor to gain access to the examination. Acceptable forms of identification (photograph and signature required) include:

- Government-issued driver's license
- Passport
- Non-US Military issued identification card
- Any Government-Issued Identification Card (must include photo)

The name and photo on the identification presented must match the examinee as identified at the time of registration. Candidates will not be permitted to test without proper identification and all fees will be forfeited.

2.2.2 Examination Security

To provide a fair and consistent environment for all candidates, examinations are delivered using standardized procedures following strict security protocols. Candidates are required to follow all testing rules at all times. Failure to follow these rules may result in termination of a candidate's testing session, invalidation of the candidate's examination score and/or disciplinary action.

The following rules will be enforced on examination day:

- Log in prior to the scheduled testing appointment
 - The "Launch Exam" button becomes available at the scheduled connect time
 - If 15 minutes or more have passed since your scheduled connection time, you will be denied access to the examination and the examination will show as "expired"
- Candidates will be given the opportunity for a 10-minute break midway through the examination. This break will not be counted as examination time but will include time required to check in again. Following the break, candidates will gain access to the second set of questions, but will not be able to access the original set of questions. Unauthorized breaks are not permitted.
- Examination room lighting should be adequate for the proctor to view the candidate and surrounding area by some means.
- The candidate must remain in view of the proctor, except during the break.
- Reading out loud or any attempts to capture examination content (e.g., taking photos, copying questions, print the screen, etc.) are prohibited.
- Attempts to remotely control the computer are prohibited
- No other individuals are permitted in the testing location with the candidate.
- Note taking is not allowed either on paper or on the computer.
- Using Artificial Intelligence (e.g., Chat GPT) to look up answers is not acceptable.

2.3 Candidate Statement of Understanding

On the day of the Examination, each candidate will receive an electronic copy of the *Candidate Statement of Understanding*. Candidates will not be able to begin the examination without reading and agreeing to the statement:

Conduct occurring before, during or after testing that violates principles detailed in this Statement of Understanding may result in invalidation of examination results.

1. The examination questions are confidential. The examination questions are the property of TNI. Unauthorized disclosure of the examination questions is prohibited. By signing this statement of understanding, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the examination items. You must therefore:
 - a. Keep the examination content confidential, even after the examination. This also includes not disclosing the content with anyone '
 - b. Not record, memorize, or attempt to recreate examination items.
2. Candidates will be observed at all times while they are taking the examination. This observation will include direct observation by proctors or camera monitors. Proctors may not necessarily inform you of their observations, but they are required to report behavior that may violate the terms and regulations of TNI.
3. Any cheating and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the examination process by any candidate violates the purpose and principles of the examination. Any person who witnesses such behavior must report it to the proctor and/or TNI as soon as possible.
4. TNI strives to report results that accurately reflect the skill and performance of each candidate and represent a valid measure of their knowledge or competence as sampled by the examination. Accordingly, our standards and procedures for administering examinations have two related goals: giving candidates comparable opportunities to demonstrate their abilities; and preventing any person from gaining an unfair advantage over others. To promote these objectives, TNI reserves the right to cancel or withhold any examination results when, in the sole opinion of TNI, a testing irregularity occurs; cheating has occurred; there is an apparent discrepancy in, or falsification of, a candidate's identification; a candidate engages in misconduct or plagiarism; or the results are believed to be invalid for any other reason.

A candidate agrees to abide by all oral and written instructions controlling the conduct of the examination. These instructions are intended to preserve the integrity of the examination process by providing standard test administration conditions that yield valid and reliable results.

2.4 After the Examination

Following the administration of the examination, all question data will be reviewed to ensure that questions meet best practice standards for high stakes examinations. If some questions do not meet such standards, they will be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts to determine the most appropriate course of action to ensure examination fairness.

Examination results will be provided following the examination marking review. The time between the end of the examination administration period and the release of scores to candidates will be **approximately 30 days**. Candidates will receive email notification when their results are available to view in their online record. For reasons of privacy and confidentiality, examination results are released to the candidate only.

Individual score reports will contain an indication of “pass” or “fail” for the overall examination. All candidates will be provided with an indication of their performance in each of the content domains upon request. See section 6.0 on the procedure for submitting an appeal on a “fail” score.

2.5 Retesting

Candidates not successful during their initial examination attempt will receive information about retesting. Application approval is valid for 12 months from the application approval date. Candidates who fail the examination may retest during the next testing window (if it is within the 12-month eligibility period) by paying a retest fee of \$250. Once the 12-month eligibility period ends, a new application must be submitted with full payment. Testing attempts are limited to one attempt per testing window.

2.6 Certificates

A certificate will be available for download in the online record for candidates that are successful in passing the examination. Successful candidates will also receive information on maintaining certified status. Candidates should ensure their contact information is current by updating their certification profile. The certificates will identify the time period for which they are valid.

3.0 The Digital Badge Option

Under this option an individual could become a Certified Professional by demonstrating they have taken the prescribed training courses and passed an exam for each badge. Individuals also have the option to earn one or more digital badges for specific competencies, called specialties, without applying for a full credential.

3.1 Applying for Badges

3.1.1 Submitting an Application

Applicants must apply for each digital badge examination online at <https://nelac-institute.org/credential/badge>. If the applicant does not already have a profile in the system, the applicant will be prompted to create one. This information is confidential and will be handled according to TNI's [Privacy Policy](#).

3.1.2 Fees

Badge fees are required to be paid in advance at the time of application. Once all the digital badges have been awarded, the individual may then apply to become a certified professional by paying an additional certificate fee.

Table 2. Fee Schedule for Digital Badges

	TNI Member	Non-Member
Badge Base Fee (per badge)	\$95	\$145
Supplemental Badge Fee for Scientific Discipline ¹	\$45/discipline ²	\$60/discipline ²

Badge Fee - Retest	\$65	\$80
Certificate Fee (from all awarded badges)	\$110	\$160

Notes:

1. Asbestos, Chemistry, Microbiology, Radiochemistry, Whole Effluent Toxicity
2. The base fee covers one discipline; the supplemental fee is for each additional discipline.

3.1.3 Scheduling the Examination

An email will be sent to candidates who have submitted the complete application and paid the badge fee with instructions on how to schedule their examination.

3.1.4 Content Coverage on the Examination

The examination questions cover the topics detailed in the applicable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) document associated with each badge. The examination is offered in English only. Candidates are encouraged to develop a study plan based on review of the KSA document.

3.2 Taking the Examination

The examination consists of 30 multiple-choice questions. Candidates have 25 minutes to complete the examination.

3.3 Candidate Statement of Understanding

On the day of the Examination, each candidate will receive an electronic copy of the *Candidate Statement of*

CANDIDATE STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Conduct that violates principles detailed in this Statement of Understanding may result in invalidation of examination results.

1. The examination is confidential. The examination questions are the property of TNI. Unauthorized disclosure of the examination questions is prohibited under copyright laws. By signing this statement of understanding, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the examination items. You must therefore:
 - a. Keep the examination content confidential, even after the examination. This also includes not discussing the content with anyone who has been administered the examination before you, with you, or who has not yet taken the examination.
 - b. Not record or attempt to recreate examination items, whether for financial gain or not.
2. Any cheating and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the examination process by any candidate violates the purpose and principles of the examination.



By checking this box, I agree to abide by the principles stated above.

Understanding. Candidates will not be able to begin the examination without reading and agreeing to the statement.

TNI strives to report results that accurately reflect the skill and performance of each candidate and represent a valid measure of their knowledge or competence as sampled by the examination. Accordingly, our standards and procedures for administering examinations have two related goals: 1) giving candidates comparable opportunities to demonstrate their abilities; and 2) preventing any person from gaining an unfair advantage over others. To promote these objectives, TNI reserves the right to cancel examination results when, in the sole opinion of TNI, an individual violates the Candidate Statement of Understanding.

A candidate agrees to abide by all oral and written instructions controlling the conduct of the examination. These

instructions are intended to preserve the integrity of the examination process by providing standard test administration conditions that yield valid and reliable results.

3.4 After the Examination

Following the administration of the examination, all question data will be reviewed to ensure that questions meet best practice standards for high stakes examinations. If some questions do not meet such standards, they will be reviewed by a panel of TNI subject matter experts to determine the most appropriate course of action to ensure examination fairness.

Candidates will receive email notification when their results are available to view in their online record. For reasons of privacy and confidentiality, examination results are released to the candidate only.

Individual results will contain an indication of “pass” or “fail” for the overall examination.

3.5 Retesting

Candidates not successful during their initial examination attempt will receive information about retesting. Candidates who fail the examination may retest once within a 12-month eligibility period by paying a retest fee of \$65. Once the 12-month eligibility period ends, a new application must be submitted with full payment.

3.6 Digital Badges and Certificates

A digital badge will be available for download in the online record for candidates that are successful in passing the examination for each badge.

After all the required digital badges for a particular professional credential are acquired, the individual may apply to receive the Certified Professional Certificate without further examination. Each certified professional will also receive information on maintaining certified status. Candidates should ensure their contact information is current by updating their certification profile.

Certificates remain the property of TNI and must be returned to TNI upon request. The digital badges do not expire, although they are linked to a particular version of the relevant standard which may eventually be obsolete.

4.0 Maintaining Certification

Certification is valid for three (3) years from the date the certificate was awarded. Candidates will need to earn 24 Professional Development Hours (PDH) over the three-year period. A list of qualifying activities is provided in Table 2 below. All activities must take place following the date of certification to be eligible for credit.

Table 2. Examples of Professional Development Hours

Activity ¹	PDH earned	Maximum Hours ²
Training Course (Attendee)	1/hour of course	No limit
Training Course (Instructor)	2/per hour of course	No limit
Employment	0.1/month	3.6
Relevant College Course	1/per each credit hour	No limit
Meetings/Conferences ³	1/day	15
Committee Officer ³	2/year	6
Committee Member ³	0.1/per meeting attended	10
Presentation at Conference ³	1/presentation	6
Membership in Professional Society ³	0.5/year/society	6
Proctor exam	4 hours per exam	No limit

Notes

1. Individuals could submit additional PDH for other similar activities.
2. Over a 3-year period.
3. Includes organizations other than TNI such as ASTM, ACS, ACIL, FSEA, etc.

Individuals must provide proof of earning the hours by providing documentation such as registration records, meeting minutes, employment records, and other related items.

Table 3. Fee Schedule for Recertification

	TNI Member	Non-Member
Recertification Fee	\$225	\$350

5.0 Code of Conduct for Certified Professionals

TNI established the Certified Professional credential to validate that credentialing professionals have met the requirements and standards for certification established by TNI. The credential communicates to the public not only that the credentialing professional meets professional standards of knowledge and skills, but also that individuals holding certification are upholding appropriate standards of professionalism and ethics in practice. This section outlines principles that all individuals who seek or hold TNI-issued credentials are expected to uphold. Breaches of these principles may be cause for disciplinary review and may result in sanctions, including private reprimand, public censure, revocation of certification, denial of eligibility for certification or recertification, administrative suspension, and/or other actions deemed appropriate by the TNI Credentials Committee.

Individuals who hold or are seeking TNI-issued credentials shall protect the integrity of such credentials and of the processes by which those credentials are earned and awarded. These individuals:

- Shall not submit to TNI any document that contains a misstatement of fact or omits a fact to obtain, attempt to obtain, or maintain a TNI credential.
- Shall not make a false representation to have earned a TNI credential that was not awarded by TNI.
- Shall promptly inform the TNI Credentials Coordinator when possessing knowledge or evidence that raises a substantial question of cheating on or misuse of questions from an examination, fraudulent use of a TNI- credential or misrepresentation of certification status by any individual.

6.0 Complaints

All candidates have the right to file a complaint of an adverse decision resulting in a denial of certification or recertification based on a failure to satisfy application or eligibility requirements, payment of fees, or failure of the certification examination caused by conditions beyond the candidate's control.

Such complaints must be submitted using the TNI complaint procedure outlined in SOP 1-106 by email within 30 calendar days of the date of the determination notice. If no complaint is made within 30 calendar days, the decision will become final.

TNI shall review the complaint within 60 days of receipt. Complaints must include a statement from the subject of adverse decision containing their full statement of the facts relevant to the alleged violation and the specific basis for the complaint, as well as any verifiable supporting documentation.

The complaint will be reviewed based on the records in the matter and the additional information provided by the appellant, as well as any other pertinent information provided by staff. The disposition of the complaint will be managed according to SOP 1-106.

7.0 Nondiscrimination Statement

As outlined in TNI Policy 1-128 TNI does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, ethnic origin, color, religion, race, disability, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its activities or operations. This includes, but is not limited to, applicants certification/recertification approvals. TNI is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for candidate certifications.

8.0 Use of the Digital Badges and the Certified Professional Certificate

8.1 Digital Badges

The badge may be used on stationery, websites, business cards, social media accounts, and other promotional materials. If the KSAs for a given badge change, an individual may obtain a new badge by taking and passing a

training course that covers the changes.

8.2 The Certified Professional Certificate

The certificate may be used only as long as the certification remains valid, current and in good standing. Should the certification be suspended or withdrawn for any reason, the individual must immediately cease the use of the certificate, including but not limited to, any use on stationery, websites, business cards, social media accounts, and other promotional materials.

The TNI credential is a non-transferable, revocable, limited, non-exclusive license to use the designation “Certified Professional.”

After meeting all eligibility requirements, individuals may use their credential in all correspondence, on resumes, and promotional materials, such as stationery, websites, business cards, etc.

Individuals who have met the certification requirements are authorized to use the credential according to the following guidelines:

- The credential may be used as TNI Certified Professional – [e.g., Quality Management System] or TNI-CP-[e.g., QMS]
- The credential is used after the individuals name and following any academic degrees and/or licensure (e.g., Jane Smith, PhD, TNI-CP-[QMS])

9.0 References

Policy 1-128, Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment in TNI Programs and Activities

Policy 1-129, Expected Conduct of Participants in TNI Activities

TNI SOP 1-106, Complaint Resolution Process

TNI SOP 1-129, Developing Examination Questions