

**UPDATE REPORT  
FROM THE PCC EXAM COMMITTEE  
TO NFPA® MEMBERSHIP**

The members of this Committee wish to take this opportunity to report to the NFPA® membership on the progress of taking the PCC Exam from a dream to a reality.

The Committee also wishes to take this opportunity to thank all the delegates attending the 2010 convention for their approval of the contract with PES. As you will see after reading this report, their participation has been key in accomplishing our task much more quickly than some of us thought possible.

*Job Analysis Task Force*

In July 2010, in conjunction with staff at PES, a Job Analysis Task Force [JATF] was formed, which consisted of certain members from the PCC Exam Committee, together with paralegal representatives from different types of practice settings; paralegal educators; lawyers and two judges, all from different areas around the country. The group worked with Carla Caro and Pat Melendez from PES.

The purpose for having a detailed job analysis is to be able to create the foundation for a legally defensible certification exam. The exam is being designed to capture competencies and knowledge of the entry level candidate who meets the experience and requirements as adopted by the NFPA® delegates. There are three phases to the process: delineation of practice, validation survey and test specification development.

*Delineation of Practice.* The purpose of this phase is to construct a detailed content, or process, based description of practice, including the major performance domains, key tasks within the performance domains and the knowledge and skills required to perform those tasks. Information was gathered from paralegal programs, including 2-year, 4-year and certification programs. Also included was information on paralegal utilization in a variety of employment settings and various state regulatory schemes.

*Validation Survey.* This involved a validation of the description of practice through a survey of a representative sample of current practitioners, locally, nationally or internationally. Survey participants reviewed domains, tasks and KS [knowledge/skills] statements and rated them according to a set of validation scales specifically designed for our program. This information was analyzed to refine the detailed description of practice and to identify any differences in practice related to

professional or demographic variables.

*Test Specifications Development.* Results from the practice analysis were taken to develop a set of test specifications that are based on empirical evidence and subject matter expert judgments. Ratings from the validation survey were used to establish weightings for the various task and knowledge areas within the practice. A combination of the task and knowledge areas, together with their relative weightings are used to develop a set of test specifications and that determines the content of our exam.

The JATF has completed its work and the core domains have been established for the PCC Exam.

### *Exam Development*

*Item Writing* - The next step in this process was the item [questions] writing. Those who participated in this process were PACE Registered Paralegals®, Certified Paralegals, paralegal educators, paralegal managers and lawyers, all with the assistance and guidance of PES staff. As has been pointed out many times in the past, PES is known for its high level of integrity and has a sound reputation as a leader in professional certification exams. The items covered the core competencies within the domains identified by the JATF during the initial test development phase and make up the exam test bank from which the actual exam will be constructed. At this point in time, we have approximately 1,000 such items.

For all those who participated in the item writing phase, the Committee expresses its thanks and appreciation, for without your assistance, the job would have been much more difficult. Also a special thanks to PES staff for having a program which allowed item writers to do this work online.

After all the items were submitted, a group gathered at the offices of PES on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> for the purposes of item review. Since there were a number of items in the test bank from previous sessions for updating the PACE® exam which had been designated as "entry level", those items, in addition to the items recently submitted, were reviewed. Many thanks go out to Ann Price for her review prior to the meeting of items already in the test bank. The group was successful in reviewing all the new items submitted and almost all those items in the test bank that had not been reviewed. A 3-member team finished up the review of items in the test bank a week later.

*Exam Construction* - In this phase, the computers at PES select questions from the exam test bank in the appropriate proportion to the percentage

points for each domain. Two such exams are constructed. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, and again on April 16<sup>th</sup>, a group met through the services of WebEx, with Vita Greco from PES to review the draft exams to ensure that questions are current with regard to core competencies identified by the JATF. That process is now complete. By using WebEx, we were able to avoid travel, hotel and meal expenses, as well as not having to take off time from work. Being able to accomplish some of these tasks through these services made the process much easier.

It should be noted that this phase is conducted under strict security and accountability. The purpose of this review is to make certain that the questions are current with regard to the core competencies identified by the JATF and that one question does not inadvertently give away the correct response to another.

*Setting the Pass Point* - The next step involves a group actually taking the exam(s) from the perspective of the "minimally qualified" candidate based on the established criteria for eligibility. The two exams will be taken using two distinct methods. The two methods are employed independently and should converge with the same, or nearly the same, result. PES then takes the evaluators' scores as a whole and uses state of the art computer technology to establish the pass point, or minimum score required to pass the PCC Exam. PES also weights each question as to value, as not all questions have the same value; some are worth more points than others. As yet, no date has been set for this step in the process.

*Pilot [Beta] Testing* - The final step is the pilot testing, which will help to ensure there are no problems with the exam. Pilot testing is taking place on Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 locations around the country. Applications for this paper/pencil pilot test are web based, and applications for the computer based exam will also be web based instead of paper. Once the beta testing is concluded the exam will be finalized by PES and provided to Prometric/Sylvan Learning, who provides the testing facilities at locations all across the country.

We on the Committee think it should be obvious to the membership that our faith in PES was well placed. Their computer based technology is allowing NFPA® to do this work much more efficiently and more quickly than any of us ever thought possible.

*Study Manual* - Initial work has been started on a study manual. It is the goal of the Committee to have it ready for purchase well in advance of the rollout of the exam, which, at this point, is scheduled for November 1, 2011.

If anyone has any questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to ask. As always, the continued support of the membership for this project is greatly appreciated.

## PCC Exam Committee Members