

Frequently Asked Questions

AACS Professional Employee Certification Program and Continuing Education

General Information

1. What are the professional certificate renewal requirements?

Certificates may be renewed with either college credit (semester hours) or contact hours of professional development. Except for the preschool provisional certificate, all provisional certificates must be renewed with college credit (semester hours); contact hours may not be used to renew provisional certificates.

2. How do I get college credit?

College credit must be from an accredited or AACS-recognized college or university. Accredited colleges must be accredited by an agency approved by the USDOE. The AACS has not published a list of approved colleges, but AACS has examined a number of colleges according to the standards established by our Accreditation Commission, and you may contact the AACS office for a determination.

3. Who needs continuing education?

Teachers and administrators who have a Professional or Advanced Professional certificate under the AACS Professional Employee Certification Program need to earn continuing education or college credits (semester hours) in order to renew their certificate. Provisional certificates require college credits (semester hours) in order to renew their certificate.

4. How many contact hours are required and do professional development courses have to be for specific topics?

The Professional and Advanced Professional categories of certification specify that 60 contact hours are needed for renewal. These hours must be in programs that have been approved by AACS. The majority of a teacher's contact hours need to be either in general education or in the teacher's area of endorsement.

5. What is a contact hour?

A contact hour is one hour of instruction in an organized, continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction. No credit will be given for a period of less than fifty minutes. Only instructional time may count for credit. Time spent in preparation, reading, or out-of-class assignments may not count for credit. Completion certificates or attendance vouchers must state the number of contact hours. (ACSI and PCC count 6 contact hours as one CEU. In almost all other cases, one CEU is 10 contact hours.)

6. What about application forms?

Forms for recording continuing education are available from the AACS office and on the AACS website. One form must be completed for each continuing education workshop, class, or session.

Activities and Programs

7. What activities count for continuing education credit?

Teachers do many things that are good for personal enrichment and professional development (read articles and books, watch video, travel). While these are very good activities, they do not count for continuing education credit, primarily because there is no reasonable method for verifying that the participant was actively engaged in the learning activity or for assigning an appropriate value to the activity. To meet the standards for continuing education credit, an activity must meet all of the following requirements.

- Be sponsored by a responsible agent (college, convention, school, approved professional development provider). These agencies (1) verify the instructional time or the instructional time equivalent for online studies and (2) provide certificates verifying completion and the number of contact hours of instruction.
- Be capably directed and supervised.
- Be taught by an instructor qualified by education and experience.
- Provide training in the teacher's endorsement field(s) or in general education topics such as classroom management, classroom technology, and teaching methods.
- Be taught in a classroom or seminar setting, unless approved online instruction.

8. What activities do not count for continuing education credit?

To qualify an activity must meet all of the guidelines listed above. Teachers participate in many worthwhile activities that do not count for continuing education credit for a number of reasons, most often because they cannot be verified, the value of the activity cannot be determined, or the activity is not truly a professional learning activity. Examples of these activities include

- Reading, study, and travel (unless part of a program provided by an approved provider).
- Sunday school classes and church services.
- Staff meetings and in-service training (unless approved for on-site professional development).
- Required trainings that are not related to improving instruction, such as child abuse prevention training, blood-borne pathogen training, training using your school's grading software, or CPR training.

9. What are the approved programs and continuing education categories?

The following categories were created by AACCS Accreditation Commission action in February 2011. The categories do not limit renewals in any way not limited prior to adoption, but they seek to clarify the number of contact hours that can be earned from various sources for certification renewal.

All continuing education credit fits in one of the two categories:

Category A

- Audited college course work
- Continuing education programs offered by colleges that are members of the American Association of Christian Colleges and Seminaries (AACCS).
- Other college continuing education programs may be approved. Verify, in advance, with the AACCS Office. See FAQ 10 and FAQ 11 below.
- Approved online professional development sources.
- Most regional and state AACCS teacher conventions offer continuing education approved programs. Verify this with your convention coordinator.
- Off-site (not provided at the school facility) professional development activities, upon approval. See FAQ 10 and FAQ 11 below.
- On-site (provided at the school facility) professional development provided by a qualified instructor who is not part of the ministry faculty or staff, upon approval. See FAQ 10 and FAQ 11 below.

Category B*

Schools may conduct their own continuing education activities. If a school conducts its own continuing education activity, it is necessary to complete the **Preapproval Application** prior to the activity taking place. This will ensure that the activity will be accepted for continuing education credit. Each teacher is permitted 20 contact hours for Category B on-site activities toward certificate renewal. This means that no more than 20 of the 60 contact hours needed to renew a certificate may be for Category B on-site activities. To qualify for continuing education credit, an on-site professional development activity must meet all of the following criteria.

- Be conducted by an instructor possessing at least a Bachelor's degree in education or another field directly related to the activity.
- Be conducted in a classroom or seminar setting.
- Directly address the educational process (Bible studies, preaching services, and self-help workshops do not qualify for continuing education credit).
- Address topics appropriate to the endorsement areas of those receiving continuing education credit.
- On-site (provided at the school facility) professional development provided by qualified faculty or staff. See FAQ 10 and FAQ 11 below.
- On-site professional development provided by video or audio instruction. The instructor must be qualified, and the learning activity must be supervised and verified by school administrative staff. See FAQ 10 and FAQ 11 below.

***For certificate renewal, no more than 20 contact hours may be from Category B.**

10. How do I get approval for my activity?

If you wish to submit a request for continuing education credit for a staff development activity, complete *Preapproval Application* and submit to the AACS office for approval prior to event; one Preapproval Application per event per school. The AACS Office must approve your staff development activity in advance in order for you to receive continuing education credits.

11. How do I verify attendance at a Category B activity or at a Category A activity when the provider does not issue an attendance voucher or certificate?

After the event is completed, copy the approved *Preapproval Application* on the back of the *Attendance Voucher* for each participant and submit this two-sided form with the teacher's other renewal paperwork when he renews his certification. Vouchers without the approved *Preapproval Application* copied on the back will not be accepted. There must be an *Attendance Voucher* for each participant.

12. When do I submit paperwork?

Submit the *Preapproval Application* in advance of the activity.

Submit attendance vouchers and certificates along with all other required paperwork when you submit your certification application at the time of renewal.

13. Are there any limitations to the number of contact hours from a particular category?

Yes. For certificate renewal, no more than 20 contact hours may be from Category B. (See FAQ 9.)