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AADNS certifications and educational prep courses were developed to serve as programs and references for long-term care. To the best of our knowledge, they reflect current federal regulations and practices. However, they cannot be considered absolute and universal. The information in these courses must be considered in light of the individual organization and state regulations.

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This handbook reflects the policies and procedures as of March 2016. All policies and procedures are subject to change. If you have any questions or require further information, visit www.AADNS-LTC.org or contact AADNS staff toll-free at (844) 796-9634.

Statement of nondiscrimination
The opportunity to earn the AADNS credentials is available to all candidates who meet the minimum criteria. AADNS does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or disability.

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# QAPI Certified Professional (QCP) Candidate Handbook

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Welcome

Congratulations on taking the first step toward earning the QAPI Certified Professional (QCP) credential. The American Association of Directors of Nursing Services (AADNS) established the QCP certification exam and QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses to promote the highest standards for QAPI program implementation in the long-term care profession. Reviewing this handbook is the first step toward joining long-term care professionals who have distinguished themselves with certified knowledge of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) program.

About AADNS

AADNS is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to supporting long-term care professionals who provide quality care for nursing facility residents across the nation. AADNS is the sister organization of the American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination (AANAC). Committed to the success of the entire interdisciplinary team, AADNS delivers accurate and timely information, educational opportunities, advocacy in legislation, and a peer community of support.

Whether you’re looking to earn one of our respected certifications or just want to brush up your knowledge by taking a course or two, AADNS keeps you up to date and makes the complexities of long-term care easy to understand.

How to use this Candidate Handbook

This handbook is intended to help you understand the policies and procedures for QCP certification and the steps required to earn and maintain your credential. This handbook is also intended to help you learn about the QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses.

Once you decide to pursue the QCP credential, this Candidate Handbook will be a useful reference for you to:

- Review the QAPI for Long-Term Care’s Body of Knowledge
- Assess your knowledge and professional experience of the content
- Identify gaps in knowledge and develop a personal course of study
- Register for prep courses, if you choose
- Study, prepare, and register for the QCP certification examination
- Maintain your credential through recertification

AADNS’s educational materials are reviewed and updated by a team of experts to ensure you receive the most up-to-date information related to this complex body of knowledge. No document can address the full list of potential questions, policy details, or future program changes. You are encouraged to use this handbook as a supplement to the information listed on the AADNS-LTC website as well as information provided by AADNS staff, whom you can contact toll-free at (844) 796-9634.
**Overview**

**What is the purpose of QCP certification and QAPI education?**

The QCP designation and QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses are setting the national standard in certification and education for CMS’s QAPI program. AADNS serves the public interest by developing, administering, and reviewing a certification process that reflects current standards of competent performance regarding the QAPI program and process. Whereas the fundamental concept of the CMS QAPI program is to promote quality of care and quality of life for residents in skilled nursing facilities, the goal of QCP certification is to establish that professionals have the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate competence in this area. The prep courses support achievement of the certification credential.

**What are the benefits of certification and education?**

Upon completion of your personal course of study and after passing the certification exam with a score of 80% or better, you will be allowed to use the initials QCP to designate your status. This designation indicates you have met a nationally recognized standard of expertise in QAPI for long-term care. AADNS has registered to own the mark QCP.

Both individuals and employers can benefit from an individual’s receiving QCP certification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual professional benefits can include:</th>
<th>Organizational benefits can include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Verification by an independent organization of your mastery of the knowledge required to perform your job</td>
<td>• Improved quality of care and quality of life for residents as the QAPI process is properly implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional growth and development</td>
<td>• Less training time needed to educate employees on the complex QAPI regulations and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhanced job opportunities</td>
<td>• Improved financial outcomes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**What are the certification requirements?**

- Hold a current healthcare professional license.
- Have the equivalent of two years of full-time healthcare experience, preferably in long-term or post-acute care leadership or quality improvement.
- Pass the QCP-CT certification exam with a score of 80% or better.

**How do I register for certification and education?**

To purchase the QCP exam or QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses in the format most beneficial to you, visit the [AADNS website](#).

**How much does certification cost?**

- Online examination (includes two attempts)
  - $99 Member / $198 Non-member
How much does education cost?
The optional QAPI for Long-Term Care educational program consists of five courses, offered in several formats to support various learning styles. Pricing is based on cost per course. Also available is a live two-day workshop.

- **Online**
  - Per course: $65 Member / $130 Non-member
  - Full five-course set: $308.75 Member / $617.50 Non-member (a 5% discount)
- **Online plus PDF**
  - Per course: $85 Member / $170 Non-member
  - Full five-course set: $403.75 Member / $807.50 Non-member (a 5% discount)
- **Printed manual**
  - Per course: $90 Member / $180 Non-member
  - Full five-course set: $427.50 Member / $855 Non-member (a 5% discount)
  - Shipping and handling is additional
- **Live two-day workshop**
  - $425 Member / $725 Non-member

AADNS membership costs $199 for one year and $349 for two years, and the benefits are substantial. Immediate benefits you’ll receive from AADNS include:

- Synthesized and well-explained updates on complex CMS regulations and requirements, as well as need-to-know information on the changing long-term care landscape
- 24/7/365 advice from peers and experts in a members-only online forum/community setting
- Access to the career center, where you can find your next dream job or hire a new team member
- Membership with an established, nationally recognized professional association
- Up to 50% discounts on certification and educational opportunities and conference registration

Long-term benefits you’ll receive from AADNS include:

- A way to grow your career through speaking engagements, writing and blog submissions, and a mentoring program
- An established support system and network of like-minded professionals
- The opportunity to play a role in the future of long-term care by participating in advocacy efforts and volunteering

**Getting Ready for the Exam**

**QCP Body of Knowledge**

AADNS undertook a rigorous process with numerous experts in the profession to determine the domains and tasks within the QCP Body of Knowledge, in terms of both criticality and importance.

The certification exam is 125 questions. The domain emphasis reflects the percentage of questions that come from each domain.
The five optional QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses are designed for long-term care professionals with a recommended six months of QAPI experience. Candidates who complete all five courses earn 9.8 hours of continuing education credit. Candidates who attend the two-day workshop earn 15 hours of education credit.

QAPI for Long-Term Care Body of Knowledge:

- **Domain 1: QAPI Design and Scope (Domain Emphasis: 17%) (Online Course CE: 2.8 hours)**
  - A QAPI program must be ongoing and comprehensive, dealing with the full range of services offered by the facility and including all departments. When fully implemented, the QAPI program should address all systems of care and management practices and should always include clinical care, quality of life, and resident choice.
  - **Tasks:**
    - Understand the regulatory background and requirements for QAPI
    - Create an organization-wide culture of QAPI
    - Develop a comprehensive QAPI program
    - Evaluate the effectiveness of the QAPI program
    - Utilize evidence-based data to develop QAPI plans, goals, and outcomes

- **Domain 2: Governance and Leadership (Domain Emphasis: 18%) (Online Course CE: 2.3 hours)**
  - The governing body and/or administration of the nursing facility develops a culture that involves leadership seeking input from facility staff, residents, and residents’ families and/or representatives. The governing body ensures adequate resources exist to conduct QAPI efforts. This includes designating one or more people to be accountable for QAPI; developing leadership and facility-wide training on QAPI; and ensuring staff time, equipment, and technical training as needed.
  - **Tasks:**
    - Foster a culture of leadership that supports QAPI
    - Assess the needs and ensure adequate resources to support QAPI
    - Develop a deliberate approach to teamwork
    - Establish an organizational environment of accountability
    - Foster a culture of safety by utilizing clinical standards of practice
    - Ensure resident voice and choice are incorporated into QAPI programs

- **Domain 3: Feedback, Data Systems, and Monitoring (Domain Emphasis: 21%) (Online Course CE: 1.5 hours)**
  - Facility leadership puts in place systems to monitor care and services, drawing data from multiple sources. Feedback systems incorporate input from staff, residents, families, and others as appropriate. This includes using performance indicators to monitor a wide range of care processes and outcomes, and reviewing findings against benchmarks and/or targets the facility has established for performance.
  - **Tasks:**
    - Develop data systems that support QAPI
    - Establish evidence-based quality outcome and performance indicators
    - Establish systems to collect outcome data
    - Analyze and monitor data feedback loops for quality improvement activities

- **Domain 4: Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs) (Domain Emphasis: 21%) (Online Course CE: 1.5 hours)**
  - A PIP is a concentrated effort on a particular problem, either in one area of the facility or facility-wide. It involves gathering information systematically to clarify issues or problems, and
Facility staff conduct PIPs to examine and improve care or services in areas that leaders identify as needing attention.

- **Tasks:**
  - Understand the components and purpose of PIPs
  - Identify and prioritize PIPs
  - Implement a PIP by using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle

- **Domain 5: Systematic Analysis and Systemic Action (Domain Emphasis: 23%) (Online Course CE: 1.7 hours)**
  - Facility leaders use a systematic approach to determine when in-depth analysis is needed to fully understand the problem, its causes, and implications of a change. A thorough, highly organized and structured approach is used to determine whether and how identified problems may be caused or exacerbated by the way care and services are organized or delivered.

  - **Tasks:**
    - Develop organizational proficiency in conducting effective root-cause analysis
    - Enhance organization-wide policies and procedures using successful PIPs
    - Utilize the QAPI program to enhance quality initiatives throughout all systems within the organization

**What is the format of the exam?**

The certification exam is completed online, accessed through your Classroom account on the AADNS website. The certification exam is in an objective, multiple-choice question format. The questions are designed to test your recall of specific knowledge, as well as your ability to analyze and apply that knowledge to example situations. There are 125 questions on the certification exam. It is not a timed test. The questions test knowledge of the domains and tasks in the QAPI for Long-Term Care Body of Knowledge. The domain emphasis reflects the percentage of questions that comes from each domain. You will be asked to select the correct or best answer from four options. Only one answer is correct for every question.

**How do I prepare for the exam?**

Content for the examination is not obtained from any one particular source. The QAPI for Long-Term Care Body of Knowledge should be a guideline for study preparation. The educational materials from the online curriculum, as well as live workshops, provide a basis of knowledge for exam preparation. You should also utilize current journals, textbooks, CMS documents such as the CMS QAPI website, and other reference material related to the subjects listed in the Body of Knowledge as supplemental preparatory materials for the exam.

After reviewing the Body of Knowledge, you can plan your exam preparation based on your general understanding and working knowledge of the subject areas. For example, because of daily use at your current job, you may have a good understanding and working knowledge of some of the domain areas—these areas may need only a quick review as you prepare for the test. For areas with which you are less familiar, you may decide you need more in-depth study or training before completing the certification exam; you can allocate your study time appropriately.

You should also consider what percentage of the test questions will cover each major content area; this information is listed as the domain emphasis percentage in the Body of Knowledge section of this handbook. By focusing your studies, you can spend extra time as needed to thoroughly understand the most significant
sources of content area on the exam. Sample exam questions and answers are listed in the Resources section of this handbook as an additional study aid.

How are reasonable accommodations made?

If you require reasonable accommodations to complete the certification exam for the program, please contact AADNS toll-free at (844) 796-9634, or by email at education@AADNS-LTC.org.

Taking the Exam

What are the requirements during the exam?

AADNS assigns you a user name and password as a key control in monitoring and verifying user identity in the Classroom area of the AADNS website. This log-in information helps ensure that each user’s information is available only to the authorized user. As a user of the Classroom, it is important that you do not share this user name and password with anyone. You should be the only one to access and complete your exam and/or course material in your Classroom account.

Once you begin the certification exam, you may complete it either in one sitting or in sections. It is an open-book format, so you may use reference materials when you take the exam. However, you cannot seek assistance from other individuals while completing the exam. The exam is offered on an honor-system basis that assumes you will act in good faith to ensure your performance is an accurate representation of your own personal knowledge and skills related to the subject matter.

AADNS does not tolerate cheating or any breach of academic or professional ethics that may compromise the security or integrity of its certification exams. All incidents of reported cheating will be investigated. Discussing content found on the certification exam is strictly prohibited; any such posts on Community discussion boards will be removed. Anyone found compromising the security of the exams by attempting to copy, record, or distribute questions in any manner will be permanently excluded from the certification process.

How long do I have to take the exam? How long do I have to complete a course?

- **Certification examination** – The certification exam is completed through your Classroom account. The exam is not timed, but expires 90 days after launching. If you purchase the exam but do not launch it, it will not expire. You may exit the exam and return at a later time to complete it.

- **Exam attempts** – You have two attempts to pass the certification exam with a score of 80% or better. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. If you do not pass after two attempts, you may purchase two more attempts for $99. If you do not pass after four attempts, you must wait one year before taking the certification exam again. In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you can submit a formal, written appeal to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AADNS Education Department at education@AADNS.org.

- **Extensions** – You may purchase an extension if your certification exam or course(s) expires. Extensions are $15 per course or exam, and can only be purchased within two weeks after the original expiration.
date of the material. If your course(s) or exam has expired and it is past the two-week extension period, you will need to purchase the exam or course(s) again.

- **Online course(s)** – When you enroll in an online course(s), you will complete material through your Classroom account. You have 90 days to complete the course once it is launched. A course is considered launched once it is opened for the first time. After 90 days, the course will expire if not completed. Course material purchased but not launched will not expire.

- **Workshop** – If you attended a live workshop, you may purchase the certification exam separately and complete it through your Classroom account.

- **Printed manual(s)** – If you purchased a printed manual(s), you may purchase the certification exam separately and complete it through your Classroom account.

### After the Test

**How is my information kept confidential?**

Information about candidates and their examination results is confidential. AADNS carefully protects your data from loss, misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, alteration, or destruction. Within the company, data is stored in password-controlled servers with limited access. Your personal information is never shared outside the company without your permission, unless required by law to comply with a current judicial proceeding, court order, or legal process. If AADNS is required by law to release your confidential information, you will be notified by email, unless prohibited by law.

**How is the exam scored?**

The QCP certification exam, as well as QAPI for Long-Term Care prep courses and workshops, sets a standard for basic levels of knowledge that can reasonably be expected of long-term care professionals involved in the QAPI process. Your performance on the certification exam will be measured against this predetermined standard to assess your competency in these subject matters. Your performance will not be measured against other candidates taking the certification exam; your individual performance will determine whether you meet the knowledge standards required to pass.

**What information will I receive about my score?**

Once you have completed the examination, you will be presented with the percentage of questions correctly answered. Based on the percentage, your exam results will indicate “pass” or “fail.” You must achieve a score of 80% or better to pass the exam.

You will not see the correct answers to missed questions on the exam results. To protect the confidentiality of the exam content, and to maintain the value and integrity of the certification, AADNS does not provide specific feedback. The certification exam is intended to measure proficiency in the subject and to determine whether an individual has the knowledge necessary for certification.

**When will I receive my score?**

The certification exam is self-scoring and provides immediate feedback. Upon completion of the exam, your computer screen will display the percentage of correctly answered questions and indicate “pass” or “fail.”
may access this information at a later date by logging into your Classroom account and clicking on My Transcript.

Once you pass the certification exam, you may begin using the initials QCP to designate your status as a QAPI Certified Professional. Credentials are awarded for a four-year period.

**Can I retake the exam if I don’t pass?**

You have two attempts to pass the certification exam with a score of 80% or better. If you do not pass after two attempts, you may purchase two more attempts for $99. If you do not pass after four attempts, you must wait one year before taking the certification exam again.

In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you may submit a formal, written appeal to AADNS to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AADNS Education Department at education@AADNS-LTC.org.

**Is there an appeals provision?**

AADNS works diligently to provide top-quality course materials and exams using a standardized process of question development and validation. AADNS also affords candidates a high level of flexibility in completing the exam. Due to these policies and procedures, an appeal will be heard only in the case of an extenuating circumstance. In this case, you may submit a formal, written appeal to AADNS to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AADNS Education Department at education@AADNS-LTC.org.

**Recertification: Certification Maintenance**

**When do I need to recertify?**

The QCP certification is valid for four years from your certification completion date. Your credential expires at the end of the month in which you completed your exam requirements. You will have a one-month grace period beyond your certification expiration date to complete the recertification requirements. **Certification renewals submitted in the grace period will be automatically subjected to the audit process, described below.**

**What are the recertification requirements?**

- Hold a current, active healthcare professional license
- Hold a current QCP certification
- Submit a renewal application and pay the fee of $99 member/$198 non-member every four years
- Complete a minimum of 1,000 practice hours in your certification role within the four years preceding the renewal application submission
- Complete at least 100 hours of continuing education within the four years preceding the renewal application submission, or complete an approved professional development activity equivalent (see below), or a combination of the two. AADNS offers CE courses, but they are not mandatory.
  - At least 15 hours must be in QAPI or quality improvement areas
  - The remaining 85 hours can be for any healthcare-approved continuing education that meets licensure requirements (for a total of 100 hours)
• For individuals who hold both DNS-CT and QCP-CT certifications, the CE requirements can be combined to include 21 hours in the DNS competency domains and 15 hours in QAPI or quality improvement topics over the four-year renewal period (21 hours + 15 hours = 36 hours). The remaining 64 hours can be for any healthcare-approved continuing education that meets RN licensure requirements, or an approved professional development activity equivalent (for a total of 100 hours).

• Have the documentation to support your continuing education credits. **AADNS conducts random audits of renewal applications. If your application is selected for audit, you will be required to submit all supporting documents.** Please maintain a copy of your renewal application and the supporting certificates and other documents for the entire four-year certification period in order to satisfy any audit requests.

**What are approved professional development activity equivalents?**

• **Academic Credits**
  o 1 semester credit = 15 continuing education hours
  o 1 quarter credit = 12.5 continuing education hours

• **Presentations**
  o 1 hour of presentation = 3 continuing education hours (can only be used one time per presentation)

• **Articles (non-peer-reviewed), book chapters, or e-learning equivalent**
  o 1 of the above as the author, co-author = 4 continuing education hours
  o 1 of the above as editor, co-editor, reviewer = 3 continuing education hours

• **Research, grant writing, peer-reviewed articles, preceptor**
  o Contact AADNS

**What if I let my certification lapse?**

If you do not complete the recertification requirements within the one-month grace period of your certification expiration date, you will no longer be entitled to use the QCP credential. **If you miss your grace period, you must wait one year to take the QCP exam again and earn a score of 80% or better.**

In the case of extenuating circumstances, you can submit a formal, written appeal to AADNS to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AADNS Education Department at education@AADNS-LTC.org.
Resources

Sample exam questions

The following are examples of exam questions. Use these as a guide to prepare for the scope of knowledge tested and types of questions asked. The answers to these sample questions are included in this handbook.

1. Which of the following designates the current status of an organization and points to the direction in which the staff wish to go?
   a. Guiding principles
   b. Mission
   c. Charter
   d. Vision

2. Which of the following activities is outside the QAA committee’s scope?
   a. Developing action plans to correct quality deficiencies
   b. Analyzing care practices to determine the root cause of deficient practices
   c. Establishing the facility’s budget to support implementation of QAA plans
   d. Monitoring staff compliance with action plan implementation

3. What conclusion can be drawn from the CMS-suggested job-role tasks?
   a. The most expansive role with the greatest responsibility belongs to the QAPI champion.
   b. The governing body should delegate QAPI responsibility to the administrator.
   c. QAPI efforts are the responsibility of only a few highly trained experts.
   d. CMS mandates the use of QAPI-specific job descriptions.

4. In which stage of team formation do some team members question the leader’s instructions?
   a. Forming
   b. Norming
   c. Storming
   d. Performing

5. In order for data to have meaning and validity, what method of data monitoring must be used?
   a. Measurement that facilitates comparison to acceptable standards over time
   b. Repetitive audits using the same data-collection tool each time
   c. Multiple audit tools that look at a problem from many perspectives
   d. Team consensus for the desired results and future actions

6. Which of the following statements expresses what must be considered when establishing threshold targets?
   a. Always set a target threshold at 100% compliance, because less is unacceptable.
   b. Determine on a case-by-case basis what is acceptable based on the issue at hand.
   c. It is never appropriate to set a target threshold as low as 75% compliance.
   d. Set threshold targets low so staff can gradually improve weak areas of performance.
7. How does a PIP charter assist the team leader to address the team’s assigned task?
   a. It presents the mission and values of the PIP in a professional format.
   b. It lists the processes the PIP team members should use to complete their assigned tasks.
   c. It tracks the selected measurement indicators in a logical format.
   d. It provides written detail about the focus and expectations of the QAPI leadership team.

8. When developing a QAPI communications plan, what is the foundational step from which the plan will progress?
   a. Defining the desired approach
   b. Defining the intended audience
   c. Developing the key message in written form
   d. Identifying potential channels of communication

9. Which category of Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA) is described as “Resident experiences an event, occurrence, or situation which could harm the resident but will not cause permanent injury”?
   a. Moderate
   b. Catastrophic
   c. Major
   d. Near miss

10. Which tool is considered a cause-and-effect analysis tool?
    a. Pie chart
    b. Fishbone diagram
    c. Flow chart
    d. Bar graph
Sample exam answer key

1. d  
2. c  
3. a  
4. c  
5. a  
6. b  
7. d  
8. c  
9. a  
10. b

Government resources

In addition to the optional prep courses and workshops described in the QCP Body of Knowledge section, the following list of government resources may be helpful in preparing for the exam. This list does not attempt to include all acceptable or valuable references available. The exam questions are not based solely on any of these resources.

- QAPI Resources
- Guide for Developing a QAPI Plan
- Guide for Developing Purpose, Guiding Principles, and Scope for QAPI
- QAPI at a Glance: A Step by Step Guide to Implementing Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement in Your Nursing Home
- State Operations Manual, Appendix PP, “Guidance to Surveyors for Long-Term Care Facilities”