

This We Believe About Industry Certification

BY THE POLICIES COMMISSION FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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Our nation's economy is dependent upon highly qualified and skilled workers. Preparing for current and emerging economic markets is a shared responsibility among all education, training, and workforce development systems. Employees must have a combination of academic knowledge, non-technical workplace skills, and technical competence. Industry certification is one approach to assessing and demonstrating the technical competence demanded by employers.

Industry certification requires passage of an exam or series of exams benchmarked to predetermined occupational or professional standards. Thus, industry certification validates a set of industry-based skills. This statement focuses on identifying the value of industry certification, defining the leadership role of the business educator, and clarifying procedures for integrating industry certification into the business education curriculum.

Value of Industry Certification

Industry certification provides value for multiple stakeholders: employers, students, business educators, and academic institutions. This value includes both tangible and intangible benefits.

For employers, industry certification

- provides documentation of employees'

- competencies in specific skill sets.
- aids in recruiting and screening applicants.
- reduces training time and expense.
- offers benchmarks for evaluating and compensating employees.
- enhances customer confidence.
- affords portability of skills across organizations.

For students, industry certification

- offers training and testing at a cost savings.
- increases work-based learning opportunities.
- provides advanced placement credits in some postsecondary degree programs.
- affords an alternative opportunity to meet state academic requirements and earn academic recognition.
- enhances knowledge of business expectations.
- improves job placement and career advancement opportunities.
- builds credibility in the workplace.
- boosts confidence in job performance.
- increases job security.
- encourages upgrading of skills to maintain certification.

For business educators, industry certification

- increases awareness of industry trends.

- sharpens focus on specific competencies required in the business world.
- provides guidance in developing learning objectives for curriculum.
- enhances respect for educators and business programs.

For academic institutions, industry certification

- meets competency requirements at many postsecondary institutions.
- provides secondary/postsecondary articulation opportunities.
- enhances cooperation between academic institutions and the business world.
- increases potential for partnering with certification vendors.
- builds community respect and support.

These benefits can be achieved only when industry certification is incorporated into a comprehensive business program. Industry certification may provide one dimension of expertise and not address other needed occupational knowledge and skills. Certification in isolation is neither a guarantee nor an assurance of occupational competence.

We believe that industry certification, when part of a comprehensive business program, has significant value for various stakeholders.

Role of the Business Educator

The primary function of the business educator is to serve students by promoting lifelong learning, encouraging application of business principles to all aspects of their lives, and preparing them for employment. This function includes the challenge of integrating and facilitating student skill development and assessment in preparation for industry certification. Meeting this challenge requires business educators to assume a leadership role in preparing students for industry certification. To fulfill this leadership role, business educators must

- promote awareness of industry certification to students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community.
- advise students about the role of certification in career plans.
- develop a sequential curriculum which integrates the skill sets needed for industry certification.
- facilitate student learning of the needed skill sets.
- communicate the potential for industry certification to add value to student marketability and opportunity for advancement in the workplace.
- monitor occupational changes linked to industry certifications.

Business educators must assure that students continue their academic development and expand their business expertise. Academic development and business

expertise are equally as important as the acquisition of a specific certification. Business educators must communicate realistic expectations of certification value to all stakeholders since all industry certifications are not created equal.

We believe that business educators must provide leadership in preparing students to earn industry certification.

Integration of Industry Certification

The extent to which industry certification is offered as part of the business education curriculum depends on such factors as student employment opportunities, curriculum breadth and priorities, financial and technology resources, time, business program enrollment, faculty, administrative support, and partnerships with business. When industry certification is integrated into the business education curriculum, the business educator must align learning activities with certification requirements.

The business educator facilitates learning through instructional strategies that may include hands-on activities, textbooks and lab manuals, classroom instruction, independent study, computer-assisted learning, online instruction, postsecondary and business partnerships, and vendor support. The business educator must

consider student learning styles when selecting instructional activities, delivery methods, and assessment procedures. Assessment procedures must address the learning objectives for the course as well as simulate the certification exam.

Administrative support is vital for business educators to gain the background knowledge and skills essential for integrating industry certification into the business education curriculum. Likewise, administrative commitment to the goals and objectives of certification integration is critical. Administrators must participate in the development of a well-planned curriculum that provides students with a balanced learning environment.

Integration is key; industry certification complements other components of the business education curriculum. **We believe that** successful integration of industry certification requires a commitment from business educators and administrators to develop curriculum that meets the needs of all stakeholders.

We believe that industry certification is a tool—a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Therefore, business educators must help students use this tool in making wise decisions about career planning and continuing their education to be productive members of society.