

# The Evolution of the International Psychometric Evaluation Certification (IPEC)

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**Abstract.** *This article presents the evolution of The International Psychometric Certification (IPEC). The IPEC will be a new credential developed by the American Board of Vocational Experts (ABVE) that will train master's degree level counselors in the administration, scoring and interpretation of psychometric tests and measurements to preserve the framework of forensic evaluations and standards within the legal system. The article further explains the need for a new credential and how the American Board of Vocational Experts has begun to execute the IPEC with a scientific foundation, while maintaining the mission and goals of the original ABVE Bylaws. The infrastructure of the IPEC will demonstrate standards, ethics, psychometric methodologies, an empirical exam, legal competencies, evidence-based assessment and accreditation. This will begin in January 2015 during the grandfathering period, which will establish the grassroots underpinning for the project.*

The International Psychometric Evaluation Certification (IPEC) is a certification being created out of a national, scientific, pragmatic, and forensic movement to train and maintain competency of master's degree level counselors in the administration, scoring and interpreting of psychometric tests and measurements. At one time, the vocational rehabilitation field had a certification, titled the Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE), but it was narrowly applied and narrowly defined for those who could and should benefit from the certification.

The Commission on Certification on Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation (CCWAVES) was the credentialing body that provided vocational evaluators a way to obtain the credential of Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE). When CCWAVES dissolved in September 2008, after more than twenty five years, the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) took over the maintenance and renewal of current CVEs. However, with CCWAVES no longer in existence this prevented new vocational evaluators from obtaining a professional credential to validate their knowledge and training.

In May 2009, the leadership of Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) and Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) appointed a nine member task force to explore options for an additional credential. This credential would provide a means

for new evaluators to obtain a professional credential since becoming a CVE was no longer an option. The result of this task force's efforts became a new credential named Professional Vocational Evaluator (PVE). The Registry of Professional Vocational Evaluators, Inc. (RPVE) is a non-profit organization created to provide a credential for vocational evaluators. It is managed by a Board of Directors. There are several key factors that distinguish the CVE from the PVE credential. The PVE is not exam-based, as the CVE was; eligibility is determined through a combination of education/training and supervised work experience. The PVE was not developed to replace the CVE (D. Homa, 2010 VEWAA President, personal communication, November 8, 2010).

On January 18, 2011 the Board of Certified Vocational Evaluators (BCVE) was incorporated with the purpose of restoring the Certified Vocational Evaluator Credential (CVE). The primary goal was to create a new exam and maintain professional standards of the CVE. The American Board of Vocational Experts (ABVE) Board of Directors had been in discussion for well over two years with the BVCE to determine if there was a way to collaborate and resurrect the CVE. After months of verbal discussion, the ABVE submitted a formal proposal with several ideas on how collaboration could take place. A letter was received from the BCVE discussing the idea of franchising the former credential as an affiliation with the ABVE. No formal proposal was ever submitted to the ABVE.

At the ABVE Board of Directors meeting, March 27, 2014 in Nashville, TN, Scott Whitmer, Director at Large and Membership Chairperson proposed to the ABVE Board of Directors that the ABVE develop a test certification that would essentially permit those who are interested in this type of certification to once again have the opportunity to become certified. Mr. Whitmer was interested in making this a dissertation project for his Psy.D., providing that the ABVE was interested and his mentors at Capella University approved. The ABVE Board of Directors voted and approved to explore this further under Mr. Whitmer's direction. Mr. Whitmer has obtained initial authorization from Capella University Professors/Staff to undertake this project as part of his Dissertation in Clinical Psychology. Mr. Whitmer will collect data and evaluate this certification program for the dissertation.

Mr. Whitmer recognizes the need for competency based psychometric evaluation within the ABVE and in many counseling disciplines. The ABVE Board of Directors shares his passion so this undertaking has begun. There were certain things that the ABVE Board of Directors would not compromise on and one was to maintain high standards. Lowering standards of the IPEC would only drive down the quality control and ethics over the certification. And secondly, the ABVE would need to create a grandfathering status for those qualified for the purpose of building the grass-roots movement, trainers, and beta data. The development of infrastructure for the IPEC has already begun regarding ethics and standards (AERA, APA, NCME, 1999), psychometric methodologies (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2013), empirical exam development (NOCA/NCCA, 2005), legal competencies, evidence-based assessment (Barlow, 2005) and accreditation research (NOCA/NCCA, 2005).

While the ABVE is the organization that is proposed to develop this certification, it should be viewed as a certification for master's degree level counselors from all psychological and social science subfields that strive to administer psychometric tests and want to achieve and maintain competency in their respective fields. The benefit to those we aim to service and evaluate is that certified counselors will meet a national standard in psychometric testing within the scope of their respective practices. ABVE members and other outside, non-ABVE members desiring to be credentialed will reap the benefits of being able to increase their competency and professional image to the courts.

The ABVE has been a long standing incorporated professional membership association and credentialing organization with a constitution and Bylaws. It was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1988. It has elected officers and a governing board. The ABVE has an annual budget with expenditures approved by the governing board. The ABVE is managed by a professional management associa-

tion, currently BTF Enterprises, Inc. The ABVE has a platform from which organizational goals and objectives can be identified. The ABVE provides educational conferences where Continuing Educational Credits are earned. The ABVE publishes the Journal of Forensic Vocational Analysis, which is a peer review publication first published in June of 1997. There are several tiers of membership including credentialed membership and non-credentialed membership. These include Diplomate, Fellow, Associate, Student, Life, Emeritus and Honorary Memberships. The credentialed membership of the ABVE is highly measured with strict criteria and a peer review committee of at least two to three ABVE members who review the applications. Managed as a professional membership association and credentialing organization, it only made sense for the ABVE to consider the development of the IPEC. Upon review of the ABVE Bylaws, it was as if the "founding fathers" who originally wrote the ABVE Bylaws formulated them with such a strong purpose, foretelling in a prophesying manner that the IPEC would be developed twenty six years later. Uncanny as this may sound, the implementation of IPEC fits into the organizational structure of the current ABVE Bylaws. Only one new section had to be added.

### **Article II, Section 13.**

Section 13: An applicant for the International Psychometric Evaluation Certification (IPEC) shall hold a Master's or Doctorate degree in Psychology (M.A., M.S., M.Ed.), School Psychology, Rehabilitation, Social Work, Therapy/Family Therapy/Counseling, Education, or other Health Related Field from an accredited institution. Applicant will have documented specific education courses and equivalents such as Tests & Measurements, Ethics, Assessment/Evaluation, Descriptive Statistics, Inferential Statistics, Multicultural/Ethnic Perspectives, Specialized Psychometric Training and Theories. Applicant will have specific experience in testing domains recognized in the Psychometric Industry such as Academic, Achievement, Personality/Behavioral Health, Intelligence/Cognitive/Career/Vocational, Neuropsychology, Forensic, Speech Language, Work Evaluation/Work Capacity, Pain/Medical and Research. This level of membership in ABVE shall require demonstrated testing experience.

Below are the original ABVE Bylaws that demonstrate the organizational structure which meet the IPEC goals.

## ABVE Bylaws

### ARTICLE I

#### Section 2: PURPOSE

- 2.1 Credentialing** – to promote the highest standards of forensic competency and integrity; to promote accountability through standards enforcement; to provide a “bench marked” credentialing process that includes knowledge testing and peer review of forensic work products.
- 2.2 Education & Training** – to create and develop innovative continuing education and career enhancement opportunities; to provide professional annotated bibliographies about forensic matters; to provide topic specific seminars designed to enhance the forensic career.
- 2.3 Research and Cooperative Relationships** – to promote public and private research concerning topics that impact the profession of forensic vocational analysis and of the careers of our membership; to maintain cooperative relationships and activities with allied organizations in pursuit of the mission and purposes of ABVE.

Attorneys and judges have recognized and accepted the ABVE as a legitimate professional membership association and credentialing organization. This recognition is attributed to the peer review application process, strict criteria of qualifications and the ABVE certifying exam. The first edition of the ABVE certifying exam was developed in 1988 and is credited to the work of Harold Kulman (McCroskey et al., 2000, p. 4). Billy J. McCroskey and his colleagues advanced the credibility of the exam through statistical analysis by addressing the issues of norms, reliability, validity, and cross evaluation (McCroskey et al., 2000), which resulted in a revision of the exam for the 4th edition (McCroskey et al., 2007). The ABVE exam continued to be improved upon resulting in further updating and validation studies. More recently, the 6th Edition (June 2012) was validated by Field, Dunn, and Reagles (2012). This was an independent validation of the exam. Field, Dunn and Reagles were asked to review the exam content and procedures and to make several recommendations with changes to several test items and cut-off scores. The IPEC will follow the same model with an independent validation. The IPEC Committee is reviewing more than one accreditation agency for the IPEC.

The ABVE is financially solvent. The ABVE Board of Directors does not expect a negative impact to the finances of the association while the IPEC is being developed. This certification is projected to be a one- to- four cost- to- earnings ratio. This simply means if one dollar is spent, four dollars will be earned, leaving three dollars to use for development

of the IPEC. It is projected that at least two of the dollars earned for the first two years will be reinvested in development. IPEC will maintain its own financial statements. Once the IPEC is completed, the ABVE stands to increase membership from many different counseling fields. The grandfather period for the IPEC would exist from January 2015 to June 2017, approximately a three year period, during which time, existing members can become certified. This permits the construction for a grassroots movement and builds funding for the IPEC. This project has been divided into six phases as follows:

- Phase I: Develop the criteria for the IPEC
- Phase II: Grandfathering/Marketing/Promoting/Implementing
- Phase III: Training Ready for Conference
- Phase IV: Data Collection/Evaluation/Norming/Test Development
- Phase V: Test Publishing
- Phase VI: Evaluation and Further Development

The development of the IPEC was transparent to the ABVE membership as the ABVE planned and developed the proposal. The ABVE membership had the opportunity to review the proposal of the IPEC and the suggested Bylaw changes prior to asking for a vote of the members. Discussion of the IPEC was written in the ABVE newsletters. The proposal was emailed and placed on the ABVE website under the Member Section. ABVE members were requested to submit comments or questions via email to the ABVE board members prior to presenting a vote to the members. Two telephone conference calls with the ABVE President and board members were held for members who wished to have an open discussion about the IPEC. The ABVE membership was asked to vote on IPEC and proposed Bylaw changes. The voting was done electronically and ABVE members were given two weeks to vote. The cut off was November 14, 2014. The final results were seventy-six percent in favor of the development of the IPEC.

An IPEC committee was formed and the recommendations were made to the ABVE Board of Directors at the September 17, 2014 meeting. The ABVE Board of Directors and the ABVE membership have approved the proposed grandfathering criteria and the ABVE Bylaw changes. The IPEC was designed to bring candidates' level of expertise and evaluation to a new and higher international standard. This is designed for those who desire to become a recognized expert in their field of work while at the same time build their testing/evaluation knowledge base to a standard level of competency that will defend their work in court.

The grandfathering process requires qualified experts to submit the application and criteria standards as outlined be-

low. The ABVE is in the process of building the validated data set based on the eleven testing domains identified in the Psychometric Industry. The schedule is to offer an independently validated IPEC exam by 2017/2018. Candidates who wish to become IPEC certified can begin through the Peer Review Certification process now. Those interested in the IPEC may be professionals who are certified or licensed in the following: CRC, CDMS, ABVE, CLCP, LMHP, CDC, CCM, CVE and many others. The IPEC appeals to the evaluator who wants a deep and broad foundation of testing competency, yet desires a sharp edge in psychometrics for testifying purposes.

A candidate may currently be qualified to earn the IPEC through the peer review grandfathering process. If qualified, the ABVE is interested in talking with you about becoming a teacher/presenter in future conferences. A master's degree is the minimum educational requirement to apply for the IPEC.

To acknowledge those nationally and regionally qualified applicants who are Licensed Psychologists and wish to be grandfathered as an IPEC, the full peer review process is modified and circumvented, allowing a more simple application process as illustrated in the criteria outlined. If a candidate has been a CVE and master's degree level, the ABVE wants to acknowledge their expertise and allow a modified circumvented process.

Below are the grandfathering criteria to be able to become certified through Peer Review Experts:

### IPEC Grandfathering Criteria

- A Licensed Psychologist is qualified to be grandfathered by submitting a copy of their current license to practice, the application and the IPEC fee. Proof of experience, coursework or work product is not required for psychologists.
- Masters level counselors who can show proof of having held their Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE) certification are qualified to be grandfathered. Proof of the CVE and master's degree diploma or transcripts along with application and fee is required. Course work, experience or work product is not required of master level CVE's candidates.
- Masters level counselors who have not held a CVE and hold one of the masters level degrees below must provide: Proof of transcripts/equivalent coursework, and sample work experience. Any discipline that deviates from the list below will be reviewed by the Peer Review Committee to determine if it qualifies you.
  - Masters in Psychology (M.A., M.S., M.Ed.)
  - Masters in School Psychology
  - Masters in Rehabilitation

- Masters in Social Work
- Masters in Therapy/Family Therapy/
- Counseling
- Masters in Health Related Field
- Masters Education
- Masters (Other)
- Specific Education Courses and Equivalents: Because every master's degree level program has different accreditation standards and therefore different coursework titles and offerings, coursework will be reviewed to determine if you meet the following Education and or Equivalent Standards for the IPEC. Below are the eight course equivalents we will consider and will review equivalents. **At least five of the course equivalents must be met for grandfathering.**
  - Tests & Measurements
  - Ethics
  - Assessment/Evaluation
  - Descriptive Statistics
  - Inferential Statistics
  - Multicultural/Ethnic Perspectives
  - Specialized Psychometric Training
  - Theories
- Professional Experience: There are at least eleven different testing domains recognized in the Psychometric Industry. Applicants must provide samples to show they administer, interpret, and or score with regard to at least three of the eleven domains. This can be shown in a testing report or general report with psychometric data embedded.
  - Academic
  - Achievement
  - Personality, behavioral health
  - Intelligence/cognitive
  - Career/vocational
  - Neuropsychology
  - Forensic
  - Speech language
  - Work evaluation/work capacity.
  - Pain/Medical
  - Research

### IPEC Grandfathering Application Requirement

To be considered grandfathered and issued the IPEC through the ABVE one must complete the following:

- The IPEC Application

- A copy of your transcripts documenting the confirmation of the accepted degree
- A report or no more than three redacted reports showing your testing experience
- Your Curriculum Vitae or Professional Resume
- A check made out to IPEC-ABVE for \$225.00 for the application fee.

Should an applicant submit the IPEC application along with the fee and the peer review process finds the applicant short in experience or coursework, a portion of the fee will be applied to the IPEC application process at which time the applicant achieves the experience or coursework needed to qualify. During the grandfathering period, the applicants will have one year from the date of application to fulfill all requirements. Once the year has lapsed and if requirements have not been met the applicant must submit a new application and fee.

### **IPEC Grandfathering Period and Training**

If you are short in qualifications and in need of experience or coursework to be considered qualified under the grandfathering period, you can obtain experience and coursework to apply from 2015 through 2017. The grandfathering period is not expected to continue past June 2017. IPEC-ABVE is expected to have a validated test in place by 2018 for new applicants who qualify for the IPEC. There are several ways you can meet such experience and coursework qualifications during 2015-2017 period:

- Take online courses at Capella University or others like it.
- Show training experience through workshops, conferences, or professional testing company trainings.
- Attend the ABVE preconference trainings and main conference trainings for psychometric testing CEU's to begin 2016.
- Begin practicing and using psychometric instruments that you are qualified to use with your specific clientele and show competency and being guided by the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 1999)
- Be able to administer, score, interpret, and competently write psychometric evaluation reports.
- Be able to defend your testing and evaluation methods under Daubert or Frye challenges.
- Be trained to use specific test instruments during conferences and training offerings.
- Be able to speak and write competently with regard to testing ethics, measurements, assessment, statistics, and ethnic/multicultural issues.
- Gain state of the art technology and science on psychometric evaluation annually through Continuing Education Units (CEU) and conference trainings.
- Expand your testing repertoire in several or all of the eleven domains of psychometric testing.
- Increase business revenue by performing your own testing.
- Be distinguished within your field of discipline of work with regard to peer reviewed and scientific knowledge base of work product.
- Be able to apply psychometric testing in a number of disciplines such as vocational consulting, mental health counseling, school psychology, nurse case management, life care planning, family therapy, pain management, work capacity evaluation and many others.
- Consult with trainers and other Psychometric Experts at conferences and electronic media to further sharpen one's expertise.
- Participate in writing and submitting professional articles on psychometric testing through the ABVE's Journal of Forensic Vocational Analysis.
- Be part of the beta-group in validating the IPEC Exam.
- Be at the ground floor of a credential that is consistent in standards and principles with the American Psychological Association and the American Board of Vocational Experts standards for psychometric evaluation.
- As a non-ABVE member, become an IPEC and expert in your respective discipline and prepare to offer forensic evaluation.

### **IPEC Benefits**

Whether you are an ABVE Fellow or Diplomate, the IPEC is a credential that will continue to serve you, your clientele, the courts, the industry, and the general public through high standards of training and practice. For those who are not an ABVE member, the IPEC is a great credential and training ground to maintain your expertise in psychometric measurement. Below is what many Psychometric Experts expect to achieve or acquire through the IPEC:

### **Annual Fees**

ABVE Membership Fees - \$140.00

ABVE Fellow or Diplomate Credential - \$80

IPEC Credential - \$80

You may submit the application and documents via email to [abve@abve.net](mailto:abve@abve.net). Applications will not be processed until the fee is received by the ABVE. If you send by USPS mail, FedEx or UPS, please submit your application, documents and check to:

American Board of Vocational Experts/IPEC  
3540 Soquel Avenue, Suite A  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062  
Phone: 831-464-4890  
Fax: 831-576-1417

This project, though only starting, is complex by design and will take several years to implement. It is also a very historical time for the ABVE as an organization to be able to acquire a new certification that is so important to our professional image as forensic vocational evaluators.

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