A Rubric for NACC-Specific Competencies
For the Certification of Chaplains

Developed by

The National Association of Catholic Chaplains

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Introduction

On March 2, 2023, the "Center for Health Organization Transformation" (CHOT) Working Group of the Association of Professional Chaplains, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, and Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains published a rubric to be used for chaplain certification. The rubric spells out objectively what it takes to demonstrate each competency, give a finer gradient of feedback to candidates, and reduce subjectivity and therefore bias in the BCC process. The rubric developed by the CHOT Working Group addressed the thirty-one common BCC competencies that the three organizations hold in common. The rubric outlined in this document addresses the thirteen Catholic competencies that are required for Board Certification by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. The rubric may also be used for the certification of Associate Chaplains (CAC).

Listed below, is a summary of how the NACC-Specific Competencies are addressed in the certification process:

	Integration of Theory and Practice (ITP)	Professional Identity and Conduct (PIC)	Professional Practice Skills Competencies (PPS)	Organizational Leadership (OL)
Integrative Theological Essay	ITP 1.1			
Narrative Statement I	ITP1.2 ITP1.3	PIC3.1 PIC3.2 PIC3.3 PIC5.1	PPS2.1 PPS7.1	OL2.1 OL2.2 OL4.1
E-Learning Module and Post-Test for Ethical and Religious Directives	ITP 4.1			

The criteria used for assessing the NACC-Specific Competencies mirrors the criteria used for the Common Competencies. Each Competency is assessed at four levels. From highest to lowest, these four levels are:
- Exceeds competency
- Demonstrates competency

- Needs clarification
- Does not demonstrate competency

Each page shows a single competency defined across this gradient. **To use the rubric, start with the "Demonstrates competency" column (which has bold borders): it defines the level of functioning/materials required to become a BCC through the NACC.** The "Needs clarification" column (to the left of "Meets standard") defines what it looks like for a chaplain's functioning/materials to fall short of BCC competence—maybe just barely short—on the basis of the written materials, to need improvement/development in that area or clarification with the interview panel. "Does not demonstrate competency" (to the left of "Needs clarification") is the lowest level, a level of functioning/materials that does not just fall short of BCC competence but may be absent, harmful, or even malpractice. On the other end of the spectrum, "Exceeds competency" (to the right of "Demonstrates competency") is above and beyond what is required of a BCC; it represents more than competence—excellence.

Chaplains in training can use the rubric to guide their formation, educators, to guide their curricula, certification Applicants to guide their preparation of materials, mentors to guide their Applicants, ITEs/Interviewers to guide their evaluations, deliberations and feedback, and chaplains after the certification experience to inform their ongoing professional development. The writing guides for Narrative Statement I (NACC-specific competencies) and the Narrative Statement II (Common Competencies) have been modified to align with the "Demonstrates Competency" column of their respective rubrics. The updated writing guide is designed to provide more detail behind the meaning of each competency and what the Interview Team will be looking for when reading the essay and conducting the Interview. Although the rubrics are made available to Applicants as a reference document, the updated writing guides will be sufficient to guide the Applicant in writing the essays. Any template that is dated October 1, 2024, or higher includes a writing guide that is aligned with the rubrics.

The rubric offers feedback that is more detailed than yes/no (i.e., met or not). It recognizes competence as a spectrum, not just a binary. For Applicants who do not achieve certification, the rubric can help Interviewers provide finer feedback for their next attempt: a more specific sense of what functioning/materials they need to develop (and how) vs. what they need to more radically transform (and how) vs. (reassuringly, in what can often be a disheartening experience) what areas of

exceptional strength they may have demonstrated. For Applicants who do achieve certification, the finer feedback, especially at the high end of the spectrum, may help them identify their strengths vs. areas to target for ongoing professional development. Crucially, the "Exceeds competency" level interrupts a tendency in certification interviewers to ask too much of Applicants. By making explicit what is above and beyond the standard for certification, Interviewers can identify more clearly when they are demanding a demonstration of excellence rather than simply competence.

This rubric is not designed to require more time from ITEs or Interviewers—at least not after an initial period of training. Rubrics are generally time-savers, more rigorous but also more efficient (e.g., with clearer criteria, Applicants may be better positioned to demonstrate—and Interviewers better positioned to recognize—multiple competencies demonstrated in a single vignette).

The NACC will continue to seek feedback about the rubric as it is being used to measure its reliability and effects.

Section I. Integration of Theory and Practice

ITP1.1 - Demonstrate an understanding of Vatican II and Post Vatican II documents of the Church, Systematic/Foundational Theology, Scripture, Theology of the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology, Catholic Social Teaching, Canon Law, Ecumenical and Interreligious Practice.

Writing Guide: Write an essay demonstrating your understanding of some of these documents and theologies and their significance in your professional ministerial development. Provide at least two examples of how you integrate the teachings of these documents and/or theologies within your spiritual care practice. As you write your essay to address this Competency, you may find these reflective questions helpful: What places have many of the documents and theologies had in your personal and professional development and functioning within ministry? What writings within the documents and theologies have inspired, impressed, sustained, or challenged you as a spiritual care provider?

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not articulate integration of chosen documents in personal and/or professional ministry. Does not demonstrate familiarity with Vatican II and Post Vatican II documents. Demonstrates a lack of understanding of Church teaching in the provision of spiritual care.	Articulates an understanding of some of the documents but fails to articulate how he/she integrates and applies them to ministry. Examples provided are incomplete or vague as to the significance that the documents/theologies have in the chaplain's provision of spiritual care.	Describes an understanding of some of these documents and theologies and their significance in the chaplain's professional ministerial development. Provides at least two examples of how the chaplain integrates the teachings of these documents and/or theologies within his/her provision of spiritual care.	Provides examples showing the Applicant's in-depth knowledge of the Church's documents consistently informs and inspires his/her professional ministry.

ITP 1.2 Articulate an understanding of one's baptismal call and chaplaincy as a ministry of the Church.

Writing Guide: Chaplaincy is both a call and a response within the greater mission of the Church. What connection do you see between your baptism and your ministerial role and functioning? How does your provision of spiritual care contribute to the overall ministry of the Church? Demonstrate using an example of this connection in your practice of spiritual care.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not describe one's baptismal call. Does not describe how chaplaincy contributes to the greater mission of the Church. Fails to provide any examples of how the chaplain's practice contributes to the overall mission of the Church.	Acknowledges one's baptismal call but fails to articulate a connection between one's baptism and ministerial role. Provides an example of one's ministry but fails to connect it to the overall mission of the Church.	Describes one's call as a chaplain within the greater mission of the Church. Acknowledges the connection between the chaplain's baptism and his/her ministerial role. Articulates how one's call is integrated into the chaplain's ministry. Provides one or more examples of how his/her chaplaincy contributes to the overall ministry of the Church.	Provides multiple examples of how chaplaincy as his/her response to baptismal call contributes to the overall mission of the Church.

ITP 1.3 Recognize both the reality of personal and social sin and demonstrate the power of justice, mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships.

Writing Guide: Chaplaincy often involves being a reconciling agent in the midst of diverse conflicts, or a facilitator of a person's process of coming to forgive another as part of a healing process. What is your understanding of the effects of both personal and social sin on an individual and his/her relationships? Provide one or more examples where you have been instrumental in helping another in a process of forgiveness and/or reconciliation.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not recognize the reality of personal and social sin. Does not understand the power of forgiveness as part of the healing process. Unable to provide any examples of helping others in a process of forgiveness or being a reconciling agent of conflict.	Confuses sacramental reconciliation with being a reconciling agent of conflict or an agent of healing and forgiveness in the practice of spiritual care. Articulates an academic understanding of sin, justice, or mercy, but does not articulate how these are integrated in the chaplain's ministry.	Articulates an understanding of the reality of both personal and social sin and their effects on an individual and on relationships. Articulates an understanding of the healing power of justice, mercy, and forgiveness. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain was instrumental in helping another in the process of forgiveness and/or reconciliation. Articulates an understanding of reconciliation between self and others.	Demonstrates an extraordinary capacity to help others resolve conflict. Functions as both a prophet and truth teller. Demonstrates an ability to facilitate ritual to promote healing. Demonstrates an understanding of existential spiritual distress and how it relates to healing.

ITP 4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services

Note: This competency is addressed in the E-learning Module and Post-Test for Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs). Not addressed by the rubric.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency

Section II. Professional Identity and Conduct

PIC 3.1 Articulate a spirituality grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others.

Writing Guide: Your personal spirituality forms the basis for your provision of spiritual care. Describe your spirituality in terms of your relationship with God, self, and others. Demonstrate using at least one example each of 1) how your spirituality grounds and animates you and 2) how it influences how you provide spiritual care.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not describe one's own spirituality as grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others. Fails to give examples of how one's own spirituality influences his/her practice of spiritual care.	Describes one's spirituality, but not how it grounds and animates him/her. Provides an example of one's spiritual care, but the example does not illustrate how it is influenced by his/her spirituality.	Clearly describes one's spirituality in terms of its grounding in a relationship with God, self, and others. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain's spirituality grounds and animates him/her. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain's spirituality influences how he/she provides spiritual care.	Demonstrates that one's spirituality is fully integrated into his/her daily life. Provides multiple and diverse examples demonstrating that one's ministry is guided by it.

PIC 3.2 Demonstrate one's commitment to on-going faith development and spiritual growth.

Writing Guide: Spiritual care providers are continually called to grow and nurture their faith lives. How do you nurture your own faith development and spiritual growth? Demonstrate using a recent experience of faith development and spiritual growth.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not articulate the need to grow in faith. Does not show or describe how he/she continues to grow and nurture his/her faith.	Does not articulate that faith development and spiritual growth are priorities in the chaplain's life. Provides little evidence, beyond attending Mass, of how he/she nurtures faith development and spiritual growth	Demonstrates humility and articulates the importance of continually growing in one's faith life. Provides at least one example of how the chaplain nurtures his/her faith development and spiritual growth. Provides one or more examples of a recent experience of faith development or spiritual growth.	Demonstrates the habit of continual faith/spiritual growth and articulates that he/she is challenged by that growth. Provides examples of how faith growth impacts and informs his/her ministry.

PIC 3.3 Demonstrate life-work balance skills, including time management.

Writing Guide: Balancing human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions of life is vital for ongoing strength and resiliency and effective spiritual care. Provide one or more examples of how you balance your work with the rest of your life.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Demonstrates excessive anxiety about time/schedule. Does not articulate any measures for self-care. Example fails to demonstrate a balance of work with the human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions of life.	Shows some evidence of life/work imbalance but does not name the source of the imbalance. Fails to provide evidence that the chaplain is intentional about life-work balance, time management or self-care.	Articulates the need to balance the human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions of one's life. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain balances his/her work with the rest of his/her life.	Provides examples showing his/her participation in activities outside of ministry. Provides examples demonstrating extraordinary time management skills. Demonstrates that chaplain knows how to say "no" to non-critical activities to achieve life-work balance.

PIC 5.1 Articulate an understanding of the responsibility of the public nature of a chaplain's role.

Writing Guide: Chaplains are often viewed as the spiritual face of their institution's mission. How has this been true for you? What are the benefits and burdens of your role as a public figure? Provide one or more examples of how you have taken responsibility for serving as a public witness within your institution and/or community.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Does not articulate what it means to be the public face of the mission of the institution he/she works for. Demonstrates indifference or demonstrates lack of responsibility to the mission of the organization that the chaplain represents. Fails to describe both the benefits and the burdens of the public nature of one's chaplaincy.	Fails to articulate the public nature of one's ministry. Describes the benefits or burdens, but not both.	Articulates and explains the chaplain's role as the public face of the mission of one's institution/agency. Acknowledges and takes responsibility for serving as a public witness within his/her institution/agency and/or community. Describes the benefits and burdens of being a public figure. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain served as a public witness within his/her institution/agency or community.	Demonstrates, by multiple examples, how he/she consistently carries out his/her ministry, mindful of the public nature of the chaplain's role and the responsibilities he/she has to the institution.

Section III. Professional Practice Skills Competencies

PPS 2.1 Possess an appropriate level of comfort and proficiency with contemporary communication technology and be able to employ it in spiritual care.

Writing Guide: Chaplaincy has needed to adapt, like every service industry, to provide more virtual service and to utilize a variety of technology to ministry to others. Give one or more examples of how you use current technology to provide spiritual care. Include examples of your use of virtual conferencing (e.g. Zoom, Telehealth, etc.) and interpreter services via technology.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Articulates a refusal to use or learn new technologies to employ spiritual care. Provides no examples of using communication technology or learning to use communication technology in providing spiritual care.	Demonstrates use of older technology, not current communication technology. Provides little evidence that the chaplain understands the value of contemporary communication technology to provide spiritual care.	Articulates the importance of proficiency in today's communication technology for providing spiritual care. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain uses current technology to provide spiritual care. Gives examples of proficiency in the use of virtual conferencing (i.e., Zoom, Telehealth, etc.) that demonstrate its importance. Understands and uses interpreter services via technology.	Shows evidence of training and ease using electronic communication, mobile devices, and institutional systems/software.

PPS 7.1 Demonstrate the ability to integrate sacred art, music, and space for liturgical celebrations and communal prayer.

Writing Guide: This competency is a further specification of PPS7: Develop, coordinate, and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs. For PPS7.1, describe the role of sacred art, music, and the environment in liturgical celebrations and communal prayer. Provide one or more examples of how you integrated ritual, music, space and art – appropriate to the need and the setting – into a Catholic service.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceed Competency
Failed to articulate the role of sacred environment, art, and music in deepening a spiritual connection. Provided no examples showing how the chaplain integrates sacred art, music and space for liturgical celebrations or communal prayer.	Provides one or more examples of the chaplain's use of sacred art, music, and space in liturgical celebrations and communal prayer, but does not show how these were integrated or appropriate for the ministry setting.	Describes the role of sacred art, music, and the environment in liturgical celebrations and communal prayer. Articulates the need to integrate art, music, and space appropriately based on the setting and need. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain integrated ritual, music, space, and art -- appropriate to the need and the setting--into a Catholic service.	Demonstrates significant creativity and intentionality in creating a sacred environment for the ministry setting. Utilizes art and music that is culturally appropriate for the ministry setting and people receiving ministry. Demonstrates knowledge of various forms of sacred art and genres of sacred music and uses a variety of these art forms in ministry.

Section IV. Organizational Leadership

OL 2.1 Demonstrate the ability to build peer relationships for the purpose of collaboration and active participation in the creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment.

Writing Guide: Functioning as an effective member of the interdisciplinary team in any setting is vital for holistic provision of care. How do you form and maintain healthy relationships with other chaplains and with members of other disciplines in your ministerial setting? Provide one or more examples of how you collaborate with other chaplains and with members of other disciplines to maintain a healthy work environment within your ministerial setting.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Provides multiple examples that indicate lack of collaboration with his/her interdisciplinary team.

Examples of ministry fail to give evidence that the chaplain considers collaboration with peers important for the creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment. | Examples of ministry do not make a connection between collaborative peer relationships and a healthy work environment.

Examples demonstrate only collaboration with other chaplains | Describes how the chaplain forms and maintains healthy relationships with other chaplains and with members of other disciplines in his/her ministerial setting.

Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain's collaboration with other chaplains and with members of other disciplines contributes to a healthy work environment in his/her ministerial setting. | Demonstrates by example an outstanding ability to collaborate with peers.

Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a healthy work environment.

Demonstrates self-awareness of one's own personality and how personality types contribute to the dynamic of a work team. |

OL 2.2 Demonstrate skills in organization, conflict management, leadership, or supervision of others.

Writing Guide: Spiritual care providers are increasingly called to function in leadership and supervisory roles. How do you provide leadership within the settings (e.g., institution or agency, system, community) where you work? Provide one or more examples (and outcomes) of how you utilized organizational skills, or conflict management skills, or leadership skills in your work setting.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competency
Articulates multiple examples of not being able to manage conflict in a work setting. Examples demonstrate that the chaplain's style leadership led to confusion or tension among team members or subordinates. The chaplain's statements indicate that he/she does not understand or believe that a chaplain needs to demonstrate skills in organization, conflict management, leadership, and supervision of others.	Examples are limited to one's department rather than the organization or community. Examples demonstrate conflict management/leadership with patients and families rather than organizational situations.	Describes how the chaplain provides leadership within the settings (e.g., institution or agency, system, community) where he/she works. Provides one or more examples (and outcomes) of how the chaplain utilized organizational skills or conflict management skills, or leadership skills in his/her work setting.	Has received extensive training in leadership and/or conflict management and demonstrates by example extraordinary ability to facilitate organization, provide leadership, manage conflict, and supervise others in his/her work setting.

OL 4.1 Demonstrate skill in facilitating decision-making based on an understanding of culture/ethnicity, gender, race, age, educational background and theological values, religious heritage, behavioral sciences, networking, and systems thinking.

Writing Guide: Numerous dynamics affect and contribute to the decisions faced in the chaplain's workplace/organizational setting (e.g., department, institution/agency, system, community). Using one or more examples, demonstrate how you navigated one or more of these dynamics while facilitating decision-making in your workplace.

Does not demonstrate competency	Needs clarification	Demonstrates Competency	Exceeds Competencies
Does not demonstrate understanding of the relevance of the above-mentioned factors in decision-making that occurs within his/her workplace. Does not provide examples of facilitating decision-making, based on an understanding of and attentiveness to these factors, within his/her workplace.	Provides an understanding of the relevance of some, but not all, of the above-mentioned factors in decision-making that occurs in his/her workplace. Provides examples that are related to his/her interaction with patients and families, rather than decisions that are made within the chaplain's organizational setting (e.g., department, institution/agency, system, community). Chaplain provides examples that do not touch on any of the factors mentioned above.	Articulates insight into the dynamics involved in facilitating decision-making as it relates to culture/ethnicity, gender, race, age, educational background, theological values, religious heritage, behavioral sciences, networking, and/or systems thinking. Provides one or more examples of how the chaplain navigated one or more of these dynamics while facilitating decision-making within his/her workplace/organizational setting.	Demonstrates extensive experience in navigating the above-mentioned factors when facilitating decision-making within multiple and diverse workplace settings.