The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is charged to:

*Identify the areas of need for specialized ministries; provide standards and educational programs that may lead to certification in those areas; and review the qualifications of persons recommended for certification by conference boards of ordained ministry.*

Certification in a specialized ministry is a denominational credential for those who have completed educational requirements for leadership in a specific area of church ministry. Certification in specialized ministry is open to all UM clergy and laity.

The church’s need for effective leaders makes UMC certification increasingly important. There are more than 2,000 certified persons who are currently serving.

Certification in a specialized area of ministry is the church’s recognition that a person

- Is called to specialized ministry
- Is committed to meeting the standards for academic training
- Is experienced in that particular area
- Will continue with any necessary study
- Is committed to achieving and maintaining excellence in ministry

**Standards for Certification**

- Faith formation
- Academic training
- Experience
- UMC membership
- Continuing study in the area of specialization

**Tracks for Certification**

- Undergraduate
- Professional
- Paraprofessional
Areas of Specialized Ministry Available in Each Track

- Camping/Retreat Ministries
- Children's Ministry
- Christian Education
- Collegiate Ministry
- Evangelism
- Ministry with Persons with Disabilities
- Ministry with the Poor
- Music Ministry
- Older Adult Ministry
- Spiritual Formation
- Urban Ministry
- Youth Ministries

Undergraduate Certification Requirements

- Receive undergraduate degree; including certification courses at a UM-related college/university that offers a GBHEM-approved program (qualifying institutions are listed at www.gbhem.org/certification and in GBHEM's Serving the Church publication).
- Complete two years of employment in the specialized area.

Possible Degrees for Professional Certification

- Master's degree in the area of specialization
- Bachelor's degree that includes the required certification courses
- Bachelor's degree and five graduate level certification courses

Paraprofessional Certification

- Does not require an undergraduate degree.
- Focuses on training and skill development rather than academic credit.
- Is available for those employed or volunteering in an area of specialized ministry.
- Requires completion of a GBHEM-approved jurisdictional, annual conference, or UM-related college/university program (see www.gbhem.org/certification).

Jurisdictions, annual conferences, colleges, and universities that are developing programs may submit their designs and requirements to GBHEM for approval.

Role and Organization of the BOM in Certification in Specialized Ministry

- Establish a BOM committee to fulfill governance responsibilities for certification ministry careers following the GBHEM guidelines (¶635.1c, ¶635.2v, ¶1421.1d, ¶1421.3e).
- Administer the certification process in cooperation with the appropriate General Agency for each certification.
  - General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (Camping and Retreat Ministry, Children's Ministry, Christian Education, Collegiate Ministry, Evangelism, Ministry with Persons with Disabilities, Ministry with
the Poor, Music Ministry, Older Adult Ministry, Spiritual Formation, Urban Ministry, Youth Ministry)
- General Council on Finance and Administration (Business Administration)
- United Methodist Communications (Communications)

• Maintain records of all who have been certified in areas of specialized ministry and in each even-numbered year report their names, addresses, status, and areas of certification to GBHEM. Official reporting forms, resources, and guidelines for the certification process are to be obtained from GBHEM.

• In consultation with GBHEM, determine whether applicants meet the standards for certification in a specialized area of ministry.

• Interview each candidate before any recommendation for new certification or renewal of certification is made to the BOM, annual conference, and GBHEM.

• Recommend to the BOM and annual conference session a vote on those who have successfully met standards for certification.

• Renew or discontinue professional certification based on a biennial review (in even-numbered years) and evaluation of all certified persons.

• Provide support to ensure opportunities for continuing education and professional growth, and to address matters pertaining to morale, fulfilling employment and ministry settings.

• Publish annually in the conference journal the roster of all clergy and laity currently certified in areas of specialized ministry.

Beginning Application

Contact the BOM or the GBHEM Office for Certification to receive:

• Steps into certification
• Educational requirements for the area of specialization
• Degrees and courses offered by UM seminaries and UM-related colleges/universities
• Available scholarships
• Certification enrollment form HE4064 or HE4065

Steps for Certification in a Specialized Area of Ministry

Enrollment, Application, and Renewal forms are available at www.gbhem.org/certification.

• Applicant notifies BOM of interest in seeking certification.
• BOM confirms church membership, academic background, employment/vocational interest, and present employment including years of service.
• BOM verifies completion of academic requirements including bachelor's degree, master's degree, or certification course work.
• BOM and applicant determine appropriate certification track.
• Applicant submits appropriate Enrollment Form (HE4064 or HE4065).
• Applicant submits Application for Certification (HE4066 or Form 323790) to BOM and sends copy to GBHEM.
• BOM registrar acknowledges receipt of application, confirms interview date, and sends evaluation forms to references (HE4012).
• Applicant completes required psychological assessment and background checks.
• GBHEM evaluates application for completion of requirements and notifies BOM registrar and applicant of decision.
• BOM certification committee confirms that personal, church, educational, and employment requirements are fulfilled.
• BOM certification committee reviews application, references and transcripts, and interviews applicant.
• BOM certification committee makes a recommendation regarding the application to the BOM, and informs the applicant of the decision.
• The BOM registrar notifies the Office of Certification in Specialized Ministry at GBHEM in writing of the BOM’s decision.
• GBHEM prepares certificate and mails it to registrar with an accompanying letter, and sends a copy of the letter to applicant (forms and certificates are available only through GBHEM's Office of Certification).
• GBHEM and BOM both maintain file containing application, decision, and renewal of certification.
• BOM presents the certificate to the applicant at annual conference.

The Certification Interview

Before the interview begins, the committee should establish the format for the meeting, critical issues to address with the applicant, and assign questions/content areas for the interview team. A written report of the interview and any recommendations or decisions that are made should be placed in the applicant's file.

Focus

• Personal faith
• Skills
• Knowledge of the structure, programming, and resources of the UMC in the area of specialization
• Experience in this area of ministry
• Educational background

Questions

The following questions are to be used as a guide for conducting the interview:

1. State your commitment to the nature and mission of the church.
2. In what ways do you fulfill your call and commitment to the church's ministry as a certified person in the area of specialized ministry?
3. Describe the role of the specialized area of ministry in the church/church-related agency.
4. Describe the ministry setting in which you are involved.
5. How does your work contribute to a vital, healthy congregation?
6. What is your understanding of the nature and function of the structure and organization of the UMC?
7. Do you rely on UM denominational program or curriculum resources? In what places/resources will you find the UM program/curriculum described? How are decisions made as to the selection/use of appropriate/particular resources in the local church/agency?
8. How would you characterize positive/effective staff relationships? A multiple staff relationship? Your role in a multiple-staff relationship? How do you relate to authority?
9. How do you see the development of your field of ministry in the next 10-15 years?
10. Share some positive and negative experiences in both your ministry and personal life this last year. How would you describe the areas in which you perceive a need for growth or help in your ministry?
11. What concerns do you have, if any, regarding the information requested on the Application for Certification?
12. What are your plans for continuing education for personal and professional growth?
13. Additional concerns.

Biennial Renewal of Certification (Occurs in Even-Numbered Years)

- The reviewing committee should meet with all those applying for renewal of certification before making decisions about their renewal.
- Registrar’s responsibilities:
  - Send renewal forms (HE4004) to those certified, with cover letter giving deadline date for return.
  - Present returned forms to the reviewing committee for evaluation and report to the BOM.
  - Communicate with each person regarding the committee’s recommendation.
  - Prepare annual conference report to include each person who has been certified in the conference journal for the current and prior year (¶635.2v).
  - Send the annual report to the GBHEM following the annual conference session.

Certificate Replacement

- Lost certificates can be reissued to the individual at the request of the annual conference using the following procedure:
  - The individual requests a new certificate through the BOM.
  - The BOM, or someone designated to act on behalf of the BOM, verifies the certification in writing and requests that GBHEM reissue the certificate.
  - GBHEM prepares a new certificate and returns it to the BOM for completion and delivery to the individual.

Transfer of Certification to Another Annual Conference

- A certified person who is requesting a transfer writes to the receiving and sending conference’s BOM asking that certification credentials and records be transferred between the annual conferences.
- The receiving conference BOM may wish to interview the certified person before requesting or approving transfer of credentials.
- The sending conference BOM sends file with cover letter to the registrar of the receiving conference BOM and sends copy of cover letter to the certified person.
- Both conferences report the transfer in their annual conference report with dates of transfer in or out and send notification and contact information of the certified person to GBHEM.

For more information visit www.gbhem.org/certification or email certification@gbhem.org.