

CredAbility 7: Follow-up to Accreditation Workshops

Consultation with members of the Australian societies has played an important role in the development of the accreditation scheme ever since IPEd (then CASE) first began working towards that goal. Between September and December last year, workshops were held around the country to consider and discuss the sample accreditation examination. Editors gave a great deal of thought to the assessment content, the weighting of components, how candidates would approach the exam, and the way the exam would be conducted. Many editors tested themselves by attempting the sample exam and were able to offer especially valuable feedback. The Accreditation Board is grateful to all those who contributed to the review process.

In considering all the feedback, and formulating our brief to the exam development team, we have not been able to act on every suggestion made—sometimes for practical reasons, and sometimes because suggestions have been contradictory. But we are confident that the accreditation examination will be a far more effective and equitable instrument of assessment because of the wealth of constructive criticism and comment received.

One of the most debated issues concerning the exam has been the mode of delivery: whether it should, as originally envisaged, be a hard-copy exam, or whether online and/or computer-based delivery should be offered as well as or instead of the hard-copy exam. On this matter, too, we have listened to the views of society members, through the Hobart conference and through written responses to an issues paper put forward by IPEd (July 2007). A subcommittee is currently studying the feasibility and costs of a range of exam delivery options, and the results of that study will guide the board's decision.

In the meantime, the Accreditation Board has reached agreement on the following points, based on feedback from the accreditation workshops in 2007.

Eligibility

Candidates will not be required to have a nominated number of years' industry experience in order to sit the exam, but the exam will be designed for editors with at least two to three years' experience.

Standards and authority for exam

The exam will be based on *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001).

The *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edn (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), will be the assumed style guide for the exam; however, candidates may nominate, and use, another authority if they feel it is necessary (stating their reasons). The assessors' primary concern will be consistency.

If a question posed in the exam clearly requires an answer involving 'acceptable' usage that candidates disagree with, candidates should demonstrate in their answer that they understand what they are being asked to do and justify their preferred usage.

Exam development

The exam development team will consist of one writer, three reviewers who will have considerable input to refining the final exam, and one person to proofread and conduct a timing trial.

All assessors will be asked to contribute suggestions for Parts 1 and 3 (see below), to increase the variety of assessment options.

Exam marking

Assessors will either meet or participate in a teleconference to discuss a range of acceptable answers to exam questions, to ensure that the approach to marking is fair and consistent.

The exam will be scored either Pass or Fail. The pass mark will be 80% of the total number of marks available in the exam. Since the exam is a test of competence (not excellence) in applying *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, the Accreditation Board expects that a competent editor with two to three years' experience, or equivalent, will score well above the pass mark.

Exam structure, weighting of marks

Part 1 will be worth 25% and will include some multiple-choice questions.

Part 2 will be worth 35% and will consist of one passage for editing.

Part 3 will be worth 40% and will require candidates to answer four questions from a choice of twelve.

Exam content

Part 1

Multiple-choice questions will be included (up to 15% of the total mark).

The focus of questions will be on correcting errors rather than on rewriting/improving the sentences.

Part 2

The passage for editing will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam. It will be general, requiring no specialist knowledge of the subject or genre. Minimal structural editing will be required, and candidates will be given explicit instructions on what they are expected to do.

The passage will be presented double-spaced and in a reasonably large font. Scribble paper will be provided, and candidates may use pencils and erasers when editing.

Part 3

Eight of the questions offered in Part 3 will be general, testing skills and areas of knowledge that would be expected of editors working in any genre. The remaining four questions will be specialised, but the specialties offered will vary from exam to exam.

All questions in Part 3 will be of roughly equal difficulty.

Questions will be open-ended; instead of instructing a candidate to 'Write a letter', they will say, for example, 'Explain what you would do. Write down your conversation, email or other communication strategy'.

Duration of exam

The exam will last three hours. There will be fifteen minutes' reading time provided before the exam begins, during which no writing will be allowed.

Given that the passage for editing in Part 2 will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam, it is expected that candidates will have ample time for checking their work within the three hours.

Candidates with a disability

The Accreditation Board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, how best to accommodate candidates with a disability. Candidates with special needs should, in the first instance, talk to their Accreditation Board delegate.

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In the coming critical months, we will keep members up to date on accreditation news through the CredAbility column in society newsletters, but in the interim you are welcome to contact your Accreditation Board delegate if you have queries or require further information.

IPEd Accreditation Board