AQH© Certification Policies

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Appeals

1. Application Denial

Applicants who disagree with an unfavorable decision of the AQH© committee may appeal, following the process in this policy, to the NHF Executive Committee.

1a. Definitions

- "NHF" means the National Headache Foundation
- "Unfavorable decision" means a decision that denies, in whole or in part, an applicant to sit for the AQH© examination
- "Invalidated examination" means an individual examination score that, because of irregular behavior or other administrative problems, has been invalidated by the NHF AQH Committee
- "Petitioner" means a person who has filed a notice of appeal with the NHF
- "Applicant" means a person who is applying to sit for the AQH examination
- "AQH Committee" means the NHF AQH Committee - NHF Headache Specialists and Staff
- "the EC" means the NHF Executive Committee (EC) of the NHF Board of Directors
- "President-EC" means the President of the NHF Executive Committee and Board of Directors

1b. Petitioner Submission of Appeal

An applicant who disagrees with an unfavorable decision or invalidated examination decision of the AQH Committee may file a written letter of appeal with documentation (letter explaining basis of the appeal and supporting enclosures) with the NHF AQH Committee. The notice must be filed within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified of the unfavorable decision and include a non-refundable **$100 appeal filing fee**.

- Once the NHF AQH Committee has received the letter, supporting documentation, and filing fee, they shall re-review, record a decision.
- This material will be forwarded to the EC

1c. Review and Decision by the Executive Committee

The EC President shall determine whether to convene a special EC virtual meeting or to rule on the appeal by an electronic vote. The EC shall review the appeal within **45 calendar days** after receipt of documents from the AQH Committee. The decision of the EC is final.

1d. Communication of the EC's Decision to Petitioner

The AQH Committee shall provide the EC's decision by email and certified mail to the Petitioner within **ten (10) days**.

1e. AQH Committee Documentation of the Appeal

The AQH Committee shall retain all documents related to the appeal for **five** years.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Appeals (continued)

2. Appeals Regarding Exam Administration

Occasionally problems occur in the administration and scoring of examinations. Examinees who believe that testing conditions or other examination administration issues have adversely affected the candidate's ability to take and complete an examination should notify the proctor at the test center immediately and may appeal to the NHF Executive Committee in accordance with this policy.

2a. Definitions

- “Examinee” means an individual who has completed the AQH© examination.
- "Invalidated examination” means an individual examination score that, because of test site problems, irregular behavior or other administrative problems, has been invalidated by the NHF AQH©Committee.
- "Negative Determination” means a failing grade on a certification examination.
- "the EC" means the NHF Executive Committee (EC) of the NHF Board of Directors

2b. The Appeal

An examinee who believes that testing conditions or other examination administration issues have unfavorably affected the examinee's ability to take and complete an examination should notify the proctor at the test center or the online proctor examination day. Note: It is the examinee’s responsibility to have complied with all online proctoring requirements; failure to comply renders examinee ineligible to appeal.

Examinee is also required to contact NHF by email: AQH@headaches.org , within **fourteen (14) days** of the alleged incident, including a detailed letter (letter explaining basis of the appeal and supporting enclosures) and a non-refundable **$100.00 appeal filing fee.**

Note: The examination results will not be provided to examinees prior to or during the appeal process.

- In no event will NHF consider a request to cancel an examination result after fourteen (14) days.
- Reexamination shall be the candidate's sole remedy.
- NHF shall not be liable for inconvenience, expense or other damage caused by any problems in the creation, administration or scoring of an examination, including the need for retesting or delays in score reporting.
- In no circumstance will NHF reduce its standards as a means of correcting a problem in examination administration.

When the NHF AQH Committee has received the appeal, supporting documentation, and appeal filing fee:

- Petitioners receiving a passing exam determination will not have their appeal documents submitted and will be refunded the appeal fee, OR
- Petitioners receiving a negative exam determination will have their appeal documents promptly submitted to the EC.

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Policy: Appeals (continued)

2c. Review and Decision by the NHF Executive Committee

The EC shall apply the following criteria in the evaluation of an appeal:

The EC shall only consider whether the examination was properly administered at the examination site or online proctoring (e.g., if unanticipated problems in the testing environment interfered excessively with the examinee's ability to focus on the examination). Note: It is the examinee's responsibility to have complied with all online proctoring requirements; failure to comply renders examinee ineligible to appeal.

- The EC shall not consider challenges to individual questions and answers in the examination.
- If the EC determines that the examination was not properly administered at the examination site, and the appeal is approved, then the EC shall declare the individual score to be an "invalidated examination score" and allow the examinee to apply to sit for the next available examination, waiving the $500.00 examination fee.

<u>Decision by the NHF Executive Committee</u>

The President-EC shall determine whether to convene a special EC virtual meeting or to rule on the appeal by an electronic vote. The EC shall review the appeal within 45 calendar days after receipt of documents from the AQH Committee. The decision of the EC is final.

2d. Communication of the EC's Decision to Petitioner

The AQH© Committee shall provide the EC's decision by email and certified or registered mail to the Petitioner within **seven (7) days.**

2e. AQH Committee Documentation of the Appeal

The AQH Committee shall retain all documents related to the appeal for five years.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Appeals (continued)

3. Revocation of Certification

The AQH© Committee has the authority to revoke any certificate it has previously issued. An AQH© certified provider receiving written notification of a revocation of their certification may appeal, following the process in this policy, to the NHF Executive Committee.

3a. Definitions

- "Unfavorable decision" means a decision that has revoked status of an AQH certified provider.
- "Petitioner" means a person who has filed a notice of appeal with the NHF under this policy.
- "the EC" means the NHF Executive Committee (EC) of the NHF Board of Directors
- "Certificate" means a certificate issued by NHF.
- "AQH Committee" means the NHF AQH Committee.
- “AQH Certified” means candidate who passed the AQH Examination

3b. Revocation of a Certification

The AQH Committee may revoke a certificate as a result of, but not limited to, the following:

- the AQH recipient was not eligible to receive the certificate, whether the facts concerning ineligibility were known to the NHF at the time the certificate was issued;
- the AQH recipient has become ineligible to hold the certificate;
- the AQH recipient is found by the AQH Committee to have
    - engaged in unethical or irregular behavior in connection with the examination, which may include, but is not limited to, copying answers from or knowingly giving answers to another individual, using notes during an examination, or copying or distributing examination questions;
    - had their license to practice medicine revoked or suspended, placed on probation, or voluntarily relinquished in order to avoid potential sanctions, or restricted or limited in any way;

The AQH Committee will notify the AQH certified provider by email and certified mail including the rationale for the decision.

3c. Petitioner Submission of Appeal

An applicant who disagrees with an unfavorable decision of the AQH Committee may file a written notice of appeal and documentation (letter explaining basis of the appeal and supporting enclosures) that supports the appeal with the AQH Committee-that revocation or suspension is not warranted. The notice must be filed within **30 calendar days** after the applicant has been notified of the unfavorable decision and include a non-refundable **$250 appeal filing fee.**

- Until the appeal is completed, the unfavorable action remains in effect
- Written materials will be the basis for the EC review, unless the Petitioner requests a virtual hearing within the appeal letter. If a virtual hearing is approved by the EC, then it would be scheduled during the next EC meeting within 60 days.
- When the AQH Committee has received the appeal, any supporting documentation, and filing fee, they shall promptly submit the AQH Committee's decision and the Petitioner's documents to the EC.

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Policy: Appeals (continued)

3d. Review and Decision by the NHF Executive Committee

The EC will review the written materials at the next scheduled EC meeting, within **60 days.**

- The EC may, at its discretion, grant a Petitioner's request for a 15 minutes virtual hearing to be held at the next EC regularly scheduled meeting. Then, if the Petitioner is not able to attend the "offered time" then the written materials will serve as the basis for the appeal.
- If the EC chooses not to grant a virtual hearing, it will render its decision based on the written materials submitted by the Petitioner.
- The decision of the EC is final.

3e. Communication of the EC's Decision to Petitioner

The AQH© Committee shall provide the EC's decision by email and certified mail to the Petitioner within **seven (7) days.**

3f. AQH Committee Documentation of the Appeal

The AQH Committee shall retain all documents related to the appeal for **five** years.

3g. Reinstatement

A healthcare provider who has had their certification revoked is no longer certified.
Reinstatement can only be considered under the following:

- The reason has been solved.
- If **under 2 years** from original AQH certification expiration, must fulfill all of the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) minimum requirements and fees.
- If **over 2 years** from original AQH certification expiration, then must submit new application and examination fee and sit for the AQH examination again.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Professional Integrity and Examination Ethics

This section addresses questions about appropriate and inappropriate practices for healthcare providers participating in the National Headache Foundation (NHF).

- **AQH© Initial Certification**, **and/or**
- **AQH© Maintenance of Certification (MOC)**

Upholding the integrity of these processes is critical to our ability to fulfill our mission: to enhance the quality of headache medicine by certifying healthcare providers who demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for excellent patient care.

As part of this commitment to the medical profession and the public, the NHF holds healthcare provider applicants and candidates to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. These standards include, but are not limited to:

- Providing complete and truthful information in connection with the application process;
- Accurately reporting all information required as part of the Certification and MOC processes;
- Acting ethically in connection with examinations, including keeping the contents of AQH examinations confidential and by preparing for exams using study materials that do not include AQH exam questions and scenarios.

While most candidates proudly and faithfully uphold these standards, our responsibility to the medical profession and the public requires us to take any violations of NHF AQH policies very seriously. If a candidate violates NHF AQH policies or otherwise engages in unethical or unprofessional behavior, NHF may, among other things:

- Invalidate an examination
- Exclude the candidate from future examinations
- Revoke certification
- Take legal action

A. Invalidation of an Examination

Scores on examinations may be invalidated for reason of irregular behavior and statistical analysis may be used to confirm suspected cheating.

- If an examination score is invalidated, the candidate may submit a written appeal within 30 days of the notice of invalidation in accordance with the AQH Appeals Policy.
- If an examination score is invalidated because of irregular behavior, NHF will not consider the candidate for examination for a period of up to five years, depending on the irregular behavior.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Professional Integrity and Examination Ethics (continued)

Irregular behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following conduct:

- Copying answers from another candidate's examination.
- Knowingly permitting another candidate to copy one's answers on an examination.
- Unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of examination materials or content at any time.
- Not complying with proctors' instructions.
- Disregarding time limits.
- Bringing food, drink, cellular phones, headphones, books, study materials, personal belongings, or other prohibited material into an examination.
- Making telephone calls during an examination.
- Any other form of disruptive behavior, including repeated or excessive verbal complaints.

Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviors Regarding Exam Content

Acceptable	Unacceptable
Telling a colleague general topics an exam covered, such as the content in the exam blueprint.	Sharing exam questions or memorable features or cues of exam questions.
Posting on social media outlets which study aids were the most helpful in your exam prep.	Posting or discussing online specific topics to review in preparation for specific AQH exam questions.
Giving information on the general exam format, such as timing of exam sections.	Giving details on specific exam questions and scenarios.
Studying from exam prep materials or medical literature concerning the general topics covered in the exam blueprint.	Requesting or obtaining from anyone—or studying from—materials that include AQH exam content, such as exam questions, cues from exam questions or other features of exam questions.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Professional Integrity and Examination Ethics (continued)

Reporting Inappropriate Behavior: If you wish to report inappropriate or irregular behavior before, during or after an exam, email NHF's AQH© Committee at: AQH@headaches.org . All reports are kept confidential. Please include detailed information on the violation with your report that includes the following as appropriate:

- Names of individual(s) involved
- Type of inappropriate activity (e.g., misrepresentation of credentials, cheating, sharing exam content)
- What information was discussed/disclosed
- Time and place
- How the information was compromised and in what context

B. Revocation of Certification

The NHF AQH committee has the authority to revoke any certification issued by it for cause or to place a certificate holder on probation for a fixed or indefinite period of time. If a certificate is revoked, a written appeal may be submitted in accordance with the AQH Certificate Revocation Policy.

C. Legal Action

The NHF will consider legal action against anyone who forges an AQH certificate, copies an AQH examination, or otherwise uses AQH materials in conflict with copyright laws or in any other way violates the legal prerogatives of the NHF.

- Such activities will be cause for the NHF's refusal to admit a candidate to examination for up to five years.

The NHF does not discriminate among applicants on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or marital status.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Request for Examination Accommodations - Disability

The steps to apply and the documentation requirements are intended to be limited to the minimum amount of information necessary for the National Headache Foundation (NHF) to determine whether an applicant is entitled to the requested testing accommodation.

Consistent with the requirements of the ADA, NHF will consider all documentation submitted and recognizes that not one piece of evidence may be dispositive in making a testing accommodation determination. Therefore, if an applicant cannot provide results from a specific test or evaluation instrument, this may not necessarily preclude the applicant from receiving his or her requested accommodation, if the documentation otherwise provided by the applicant, in its entirety, is sufficient to demonstrate he or she has a qualifying disability and requires a testing accommodation. Supporting medical documentation is your responsibility and is prepared and obtained at your expense.

Review the Accommodations Policy

The National Headache Foundation (NHF) will attempt to provide accommodations to individuals with verified disabilities. It is the NHF policy to comply with Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Test accommodations are individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis. NHF will make reasonable accommodations during testing to healthcare providers with documented disabilities, provided that the change does not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test and that it is not unduly burdensome. (Americans with Disability Act, Public Law 101-336 & 309 [b][3]).

NHF will conduct an evaluation for all requests for accommodation.

- After the applicant submits the required form and the necessary supporting documentation.
  - To qualify for a testing accommodation under the ADA, applicant must demonstrate that they have a qualifying disability that necessitates the provision of a testing accommodation.
  - A disability is defined by the ADA as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, as compared to most people in the general population.
  - Applicants who wish to receive extra time, extra breaks or a separate testing room must agree to refrain from discussing exam content with other testing applicants for the duration of their examination.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Request for Accommodations - Disability (continued)

Testing accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Extended testing time
- Large screen font
- Separate examination room
- Reader
- Use of assistive devices

Review of the Requested Accommodation
Each report is reviewed carefully before accommodations are provided at no expense to the applicant.

Evaluation of Requested Accommodation
After the applicant makes a request for a testing accommodation and submits the necessary supporting documentation, NHF will conduct a review of the request.

- After reviewing the supporting documentation, NHF may need to request additional information to verify the existence of a disability and the need for a testing accommodation.
- In addition, in some cases, NHF may require an independent review. Therefore, if, in NHF's judgment, it is not clear whether an applicant is disabled or whether a requested accommodation is needed, NHF may engage an outside expert at its own expense to review all submitted documentation and to render an opinion.

This review is conducted at no expense to the candidate and will entail an assessment of the following issues:

- Would provision of the requested accommodation enable the results of the examination to accurately reflect the candidate's medical knowledge or other factors the examination measures?
- Would the requested accommodation fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test, or would it impose an undue burden on NHF?
- If NHF cannot provide the requested accommodation, are there alternative accommodations that can be made available to the candidate?

Notification of Approval or Refusal
Upon completing its review of an applicant's request for an accommodation and all supporting documentation, NHF will notify the applicant in writing of its determination regarding the requested accommodation and the basis for that determination.

A. Approval
If the NHF approves the requested accommodations, then the AQH© team lead will help you with the scheduling details.

B. Denial
If the NHF does not find appropriate and sufficient evidence to grant accommodations, the applicant will be informed in writing that the request has been denied.

- If a request has been denied, a written appeal may be submitted.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Request for Accommodations - Disability (continued)

NHF is unable to accommodate individuals who are not disabled. Further, as a matter of fairness to all applicants and consistent with ADA principles, NHF is unable to grant requests that would:

- Fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge that a particular examination is intended to test.
- Result in an undue burden on NHF.

Requests for Reconsideration

If an applicant is dissatisfied with NHF's determination concerning their request for accommodation, the applicant may request a reconsideration of the determination. To do so, the applicant must send a letter to NHF at AQH@headaches.org stating in detail why the applicant believes the determination was incorrect. The applicant should include with this letter any additional documentation that the applicant wishes NHF to consider.

- Requests for reconsideration must be received by NHF within 45 calendar days of the date appearing on NHF's written determination concerning the applicant's request for accommodation.
  - Requests for reconsideration should be emailed to:AQH@headaches.org
  - Requests for reconsideration will be reviewed by the NHF AQH committee leadership. Upon review, the committee may grant or deny the request or seek additional information from the requesting applicant.
  - If a request for reconsideration is successfully resolved after the current examination/testing window is closed (due to substantial review time required, and the necessary arrangements scheduling), then the applicant will be invited to sit for the next examination window, or able to request a refund of the examination fee: $500.00 if no longer wants to sit for the examination.

FAQs:

When should I submit my request for an accommodation?

All requests must be included with the application, as early as possible in the application open period. Some requests involve a substantial investment of time to review if, for example, additional supporting documentation is needed and, once granted, to make the necessary arrangements.

If I have a disability, why can't I automatically receive the testing accommodations I want?

NHF grants reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, (i.e., "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities"). Not every physical or mental impairment meets this definition. Also, if a person is found to have a disability, this does not automatically mean that the nature and severity of the disability warrants testing accommodations.

May I request a paper-delivered format?

In fairness to all applicants and to help ensure the integrity of the certification process, the AQH examination is only available on computer.

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Policy: Request for Accommodations - Disability (continued)

Required Documentation (at the expense of the applicant)

1. The nature of your disability.
2. When the disability was first identified and diagnosed.
3. A description of how your disability is accommodated in your daily life.
4. Documentation of past accommodations you have received for standardized testing.

- If you have received no previous accommodations, please provide an explanation for why no accommodations have been received in the past and why accommodations are necessary now.

5. Professional report (on letterhead)

- A professional report confirming the presence, nature and extent of your disability and the need for specific accommodation. Professional reports should be from a qualified and licensed/certified professional with specific and appropriate expertise evaluating adults with the disability you have.
  - Professional name, address phone number, specialty/expertise and credentials.
  - Description of the specific functional limitations caused by the test taker's disability that requires accommodation.
  - Applicant's name, identifier.
  - Description of the accommodations recommended by the professional.
  - Description of the history of treatment and/or rehabilitation efforts that the test taker has received for the disability.
  - Documentation addressing whether the test taker's disability substantially limits one or more major life activities within the meaning of the ADA.
- Signature of the expert healthcare professional/specialist.

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AQH© Certification Policies

Policy: Request for Accommodation - Pregnant & Nursing Mothers

The National Headache Foundation (NHF) will consider requests for medically necessary testing accommodations to support pregnant and nursing mothers. Individuals who believe that they may require such an accommodation should follow the instructions below:

- Candidates who are pregnant or nursing at the time of their examination may request an extended break time using the Pregnancy and Nursing Mothers Accommodation Form.
- The accommodation request must be submitted at the time of application.

Review the Accommodations Policy

When selecting a test center: In order to maximize the potential that a nursing mother will have access to private space at a test center, in order to express breast milk during an exam, the AQH committee must receive a request for such space at least 30 days prior to the healthcare provider's examination/testing date. Space is on a first come, first served basis and is subject to availability.

- This could require a candidate to travel to a test center that has private space available.

When selecting online (virtual) proctoring --The private space requirement doesn't apply.

Accommodation Request

□ Additional 15-minute break

□ Additional 30-minute break

Evaluation of any Accommodations Requests

After the applicant makes a request for a testing accommodation and submits the necessary supporting documentation, NHF will conduct a review of the request. This review is conducted at no expense to the candidate and will entail an assessment of the following issues:

1. Would provision of the requested accommodation enable the results of the examination to accurately reflect the candidate's medical knowledge or other factors the examination measures?
2. Would the requested accommodation fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test, or would it impose an undue burden on NHF?

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