

Qualification/Certification Guide for Certifying Officials (COs) and Qualification Review Boards (QRBs)



FEMA

Table of Contents

1 Purpose..... 1

2 Background..... 2

3 Certifying Official: Roles and Responsibilities 3

4 Certifying Official General Requirements..... 4

5 Qualification Process under a Certifying Official 5

5.1 Certifying Official Certification Process..... 5

5.2 Certifying Official Recertification Process 6

5.3 Certifying Official Reconsideration Process..... 10

6 Establishing Qualification Review Boards (QRB) 12

6.1 Positions Assigned to Qualification Review Boards..... 12

6.2 General Staff QRB (GSQRB) 12

6.3 Command Staff QRB (CSQRB)..... 13

7 Qualification Review Board General Requirements..... 15

8 Qualification Process under a QRB 16

8.1 Certification Process..... 16

8.2 Recertification Process 17

8.3 Reconsideration Process..... 22

Appendix A – Glossary..... 24

Appendix B – Sample FQS Transmittal Log..... 28

Appendix C – Sample Recertification Form..... 29

Appendix D – Sample Qualification Decision..... 30

Appendix E – Sample Recertification/Decertification Decision 31

Appendix F – Sample Reconsideration Decision 32

1 Purpose

This document provides a step-by-step process for the certification, decertification, and recertification of employees in incident management and incident support positions in accordance with the FEMA Qualification System (FQS).

Certifying Authorities (CAs) are ultimately responsible for proper execution and maintenance of the process as well as approving individual employee qualifications. CAs appoint Certifying Officials (COs) and delegate to them specific responsibilities within the process. Additionally, Qualification Review Boards (QRBs) have been established by FEMA leadership. The QRB process is intended to provide a consistent framework throughout FEMA in which employees can be fairly and objectively evaluated. Please refer to the glossary in Appendix A for definitions of CA, CO, and QRB.

Users of this guide should be familiar with the *FEMA Qualification System Guide for Incident Management and Incident Support Positions* in order to understand the processes explained in this document.

2 Background

The decision to offer/appoint an individual to a FQS position is based on the needs identified by force structure and a need at the entry-level specialist position of a particular program. CAs regularly assess their disaster workforce requirements to determine Regional and national disaster response, recovery, and support needs. CAs focus on identifying shortages of qualified personnel in critical positions, which in turn determines the need for trainees/candidates to meet mission requirements. Other factors related to agency strategic goals and objectives are also considered during this process. Selecting trainees/candidates for positions that are already oversubscribed is not cost effective and may distract from efforts to have a balanced and experienced disaster workforce.

- **Trainee:** Individual that has an open position task book (PTB) for an entry-level position. A trainee does not hold any FQS qualification.
- **Qualified:** An individual who has completed the process for qualification and has received a qualification letter from their CA.
- **Candidate:** An FQS-qualified individual who has been selected by the CO to open a new PTB for a higher FQS title. They remain a candidate until they complete the entire process and receive a new FQS qualification letter

3 Certifying Official: Roles and Responsibilities

Each program will have a CO. The CO will be appointed by the CA of each program to manage the day-to-day operation of FQS and shall be a senior manager-level employee. The CO designation cannot be held by a member appointed as a Reservist Program Manager¹ (RPM) or a member of a QRB. The CO should have extensive FEMA disaster experience. COs help guide the personal and individual goals of the trainee/candidate. COs:

- Identify trainees/candidates based on the Agency's disaster staffing requirements and strategic goals
- Authorize employees to become trainees/candidates for specific incident management and support positions, and issue PTBs²
- Explain the purpose of PTBs and the qualification process to trainees/candidates and ensure that trainees/candidates have opportunities to acquire the abilities, knowledge, and skills they need to perform in the target position
- Track the progress of trainees/candidates and ensure that deployments, other pertinent experience, and training are entered into the FQS official system of record³
- Confirm trainees/candidates' successful completion of PTB requirements
- Recommend certification of trainees for those positions falling within the official's certification authority
 - All positions not reviewed by a QRB will be reviewed by each program's CO, who will make qualification recommendations to the CA for final determination and issuance of qualification letter. The positions that COs review for making qualification recommendations include entry-level, non-supervisory specialist positions (i.e., trainees and specialists).

¹ RPM, or the employee's supervisor of record if the employee's supervisor of record is not the same person as the RPM.

² PTBs can only be initiated by FQS COs.

³ The FQS official system of record is the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).

4 Certifying Official General Requirements

COs will adhere to the following general requirements:

- Review, evaluate, and take appropriate action(s) on qualification packages submitted on behalf of an employee
- Qualification packages must be acted upon as soon as possible following receipt of a package, with consideration within 60 days if possible
- Must consult with appropriate subject-matter experts (SMEs) in, but not limited to, the following areas:
 - Program and functional/operational areas
 - FQS
 - Administrative/Management such as Human Capital, Equal Rights, and Chief Council

5 Qualification Process under a Certifying Official

5.1 Certifying Official Certification Process

The roles and responsibilities of each individual in the process where a CA certifies an employee as “qualified” for an incident management or incident support position are described in the steps below. COs are responsible for reviewing entry-level, non-supervisory specialist positions (i.e., trainees and specialists). Therefore, there will be no QRB involved in this process.

1. Once an employee completes a position task book, the **employee** will:
 - a. Prepare and deliver a certification package to the RPM to include:
 - Completed copy of PTB
 - Certification of required training (certificates, training records)
 - Relevant position-specific incident performance appraisal(s)
 - Letter(s) of recommendation from other certified employee(s) with equal or higher qualifications (optional)
 - Training and experience record(s) of previous qualifications in an ICS organization(s) to include but not limited to:
 - ✓ Training certificate(s)
 - ✓ Incident evaluation(s)
 - ✓ Letter(s) from competent authority(s)
2. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Review the certification package for completeness
 - b. Forward the certification package to the CO using a *transmittal log*
3. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review and evaluate the certification package
 - b. Evaluate the overall quality of the employee's experience(s) to include:
 - Scope of involvement in trainee position(s)
 - Complexity of incident(s)
 - Phase(s) of deployment(s) (response vs. recovery)
 - Patterns(s) of incident behavior that negatively impacts the operation/organization
 - c. Determine recommendation for certification
 - d. Prepare and send a *decision letter* to the CA for signature. If the decision is to not certify, the letter must contain the appropriate rationale and recommended actions
4. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Approve or disapprove the CO recommendation
 - b. Sign and send a *decision letter* to the employee through the CO

5. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Forward the *decision letter* to the RPM
6. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send the *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Ensure certification information is entered into the Agency database

5.2 Certifying Official Recertification Process

Recertification is the re-qualification of an employee in an incident management or incident support position. Circumstances which lead to recertification include the following:

- **Example # 1:** If an employee has not performed in his/her certified position or any position identified for maintaining currency within a 4-year period (the result of which will be immediate decertification)
- **Example # 2:** If an employee does not demonstrate competency in the position for which he/she is qualified, as reflected on written evaluation(s)
- **Example # 3:** If an employee has a lack of recurrent professional training and/or current license(s) or certification(s) identified on the Position Qualification Sheet (the result of which will be immediate decertification)

Example #1: If an employee needs recertification because he/she has not performed in the certified position or any position identified for maintaining currency within a 4-year period:

1. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Notify the CO that an employee has not performed in the certified position or any position for maintaining currency within a 4-year period
 - b. Decertify the employee in the Agency database
2. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Contact the employee and let him/her know that he/she has been decertified in the position due to currency requirements. If employee agrees to recertification, the CO will explain the acceptable parameters for being recertified and send a *Recertification Form* to the employee. Parameters may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Issuance of the PTB for an incident “trainee” assignment(s) in the position from which the employee has been decertified
 - Taking or retaking required training related to the position
3. The **employee** will:
 - a. Agree that he/she is available for deployment following recertification
 - b. Understand recertification parameters and be available for a “trainee” assignment

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

4. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Notify the following personnel regarding decertification of the employee and the requirements for recertification:
 - RPM
 - CA

5. The **employee** will:
 - a. Upon completion of recertification parameters, submit recertification package to the RPM, which will include the following:
 - **Mandatory**
 - ✓ Completed copy of *Recertification Form*
 - ✓ Relevant position-specific incident performance appraisal(s)
 - **If Required**
 - ✓ New position task book
 - ✓ Certification of training to meet parameters (certificates, professional or agency training records)
 - **If Available**
 - ✓ Previous position task book
 - **Optional**
 - ✓ Letter(s) of recommendation from other certified employee(s) with equal or higher qualifications (optional)
 - ✓ Training and experience records of previous qualifications in an ICS organization(s) to include but not limited to:
 - Training certificate(s)
 - Incident evaluation(s)
 - Letter(s) from competent authority(s)

6. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Review recertification package for completeness and forward to CO using a *transmittal log*

7. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review the recertification package to ensure the employee meets recertification parameters. If recertification required completing an incident assignment(s), the CO should evaluate the quality of experience obtained in the incident assignment(s) to include:
 - Scope of involvement in the trainee position(s)

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- Complexity of incident(s)
 - Phase(s) of deployment(s) (response vs. recovery)
 - b. Determine recommendation for recertification
 - c. Prepare a *decision letter* addressed to the employee for CA signature. If the decision is to not recertify, the letter must contain appropriate rationale and recommended actions
8. The **Certifying Authority** will:
- a. Approve or disapprove CO recommendation
 - b. Sign and send the *decision letter* to the CO
9. The **Certifying Official** will:
- a. Send the *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Notify the RPM of the decision
 - c. Authorize the RPM to enter recertification information in the Agency database, if appropriate
10. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
- a. Ensure recertification information is entered into the Agency database

Example # 2: If an employee does not demonstrate competency in the position for which he/she is qualified as reflected on a written incident performance evaluation(s), the steps below will be taken:

1. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
- a. Provide CO with the following material(s) using the *transmittal log*:
 - Employee sub-standard incident performance⁴ evaluation and any other pertinent documents that reflect a lack of competent performance in the position for which he/she is qualified
 - Documentation of a pattern of performance that in totality demonstrates a lack of competency in the position for which he/she is qualified
2. The **Certifying Official** will:
- a. Review material(s) and make a recommendation to the CA
 - b. If employee decertification is not recommended, notify CA. If CA agrees with the recommendation, notify the RPM. No official notification to the employee is required since no action was taken

⁴ Incident performance by an employee is judged sub-standard when the employee fails to perform the job for which he/she is qualified in accordance with FQS.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- c. If the recommendation is to decertify the employee, the CO will provide the CA with one of the following options:
 - Provide recommended parameters to recertify the employee in his/her current position by sending a *Recertification Form* **OR**
 - Send a *decision letter* with one of the options below, to include rationale:
 - ✓ Certify in a subordinate position
 - ✓ Decertify with a recommendation to appropriate organization element for further administrative action
 - d. If further information is required to make a recommendation:
 - Notify employee and RPM that an inquiry is being initiated. Document the notification
 - Conduct an inquiry to include, but not be limited to:
 - ✓ Interview(s)
 - ✓ Request(s) for further documentation
3. The **Certifying Authority** will
 - a. Approve or disapprove the recommendation
 - b. Sign and send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the CO
 4. The **Certifying Official** will
 - a. Notify the RPM of the decision
 - Send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the employee through the RPM
 - If the decision is to decertify the employee, authorize the RPM to enter the information in the Agency database
 5. The **Reservist Program Manager** will
 - a. Send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Ensure the decertification information is entered in the Agency database

Example # 3: If the employee has a lack of recurrent professional training and/or current license(s) or certification(s) identified on the Position Qualification Sheet, the steps below will be taken:

1. The **employee** will:
 - a. Notify the RPM when professional status changes which is due, but not limited to:
 - Lapse in recurrent training
 - Lapse in certification requirements
 - Disciplinary actions which affect professional status
2. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Document notification of the employee change in professional status
 - b. Notify CO of the change in the employee professional status

3. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Authorize the RPM to decertify the employee in the Agency database pending the outcome of recertification
 - b. Notify the following personnel regarding decertification of the employee and requirements for recertification:
 - RPM
 - CA

4. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Decertify employee in the Agency database upon authorization of the CO
 - b. Notify employee that he/she has been decertified in the position due to professional status requirements
 - c. Send a *Recertification Form* to the employee identifying the acceptable parameters for being recertified, which may include but not be limited to the following:
 - Updating professional education requirements
 - Producing appropriate professional license(s) or certificate(s)

5. The **employee** will:
 - a. Send materials regarding reinstatement of professional status to the RPM

6. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send recertification materials to the CO

7. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review and validate the reinstatement materials for currency and recertify
 - b. Notify the RPM of the recertification and authorize employee recertification in the Agency database

8. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Contact the employee regarding the recertification decision
 - b. Ensure recertification information is entered in the Agency database

5.3 Certifying Official Reconsideration Process

Reconsideration is a process that begins with an employee requesting a consideration of a decision by a CA, with the intent of reversing or modifying the current incident qualification decision. A reconsideration decision by a CA is final.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

An employee may request reconsideration of a CA's decision by submitting a letter within 60 days after receipt of the CA's decision.

The CA will submit a response to an employee's reconsideration request within 60 days of receipt. The response will be sent via registered mail.

1. The **employee** will:⁵
 - a. Include in his/her reconsideration request:
 - Any supporting documentation that clarifies or amplifies originally submitted documents
 - Any new documentation that supports claim for competency
2. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Review the request for reconsideration and:
 - Affirm the original decision **OR**
 - Reverse the original decision **OR**
 - Refer the reconsideration to the CO for review and recommendation:
3. If referred, the **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review the request
 - b. Provide a recommendation to the CA
4. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Review CO recommendation and:
 - Affirm the original decision **OR**
 - Reverse the original decision
 - b. Send a *decision letter* to the employee through the RPM
 - If a decision is to reverse the original finding, notify the CO and authorize the RPM to enter the information in the Agency database
5. The **Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send a *decision letter* to employee via registered mail
 - b. If the original decision is reversed, ensure the information is entered in the Agency database

⁵ All documentation submitted may only address the rationale used to support the CO's original decision.

6 Establishing Qualification Review Boards (QRBs)

6.1 Positions Assigned to Qualification Review Boards

QRBs are convened to evaluate employees' qualifications against established standards and provide recommendations for certification or re-certification that are fair and consistent. A QRB, in accordance with the board's level of authority, reviews candidates' completed qualification or re-certification packages, and recommends the action the CA should take.

QRBs will review an individual's training, experience, and qualification prior to certification or recertification. The purpose of the QRB is to determine the individual's qualification against standards and provide a fair, objective, and consistent evaluation process. The QRB membership includes experienced incident management and/or incident support personnel.

Two QRBs have been established by FEMA to review employee qualifications and make FQS recommendations to the CA for each program. The General Staff QRB (GSQRB) reviews those employees who fall under the General Staff positions (Operations Section, Logistics Section, Planning Section, Finance and Administration Section). The Command Staff QRB (CSQRB) reviews those employees within the Command Staff job titles (Federal Coordinating Officer, Safety Officer, Security Officer, Chief of Staff, External Affairs, Disability Integration, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Equal Rights, and Office of Chief Counsel).

When Regional staff are evaluated, a senior member of that Region may participate in an advisory capacity on the QRB.

6.2 General Staff QRB (GSQRB)

The GSQRB will recommend the certification, decertification, and recertification of employees in the following positions within General Staff Sections to the appropriate CA for final determination:

- Type I
- Type II
- Type III
- Division Supervisor
- Group Supervisor
- Task Force Leader
- Unit Leader

General Staff positions not reviewed by a QRB will be reviewed by each program's CO, who will make qualification recommendations to the CA for final determination and issuance of qualification letters.

The GSQRB will consist of the following voting members:

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- Seven (7) Regional Representatives
 - Six (6) Regional Administrators (decided by the Office of Regional Operations) will each appoint a representative for a 2-year term on the GSQRB. The individual selected by the Regional Administrator must hold a current FQS title in a “typed” General Staff position.
 - In addition, a Regional Incident Management Assistance Team (RIMAT) member (type II qualified) shall be appointed from one of the non-represented Regions. This selection shall be made by the IMAT Program Office in the Response Directorate.
- Seven (7) Headquarters (HQ) Representatives
 - HQ representatives will be selected by the Senior Program Leads for the programs identified below. Each will select an individual from their respective program to serve a 2-year term. The individual selected must hold a current FQS title in a “typed” General Staff position.
 - Assistant Administrator for Response
 - Assistant Administrator for Recovery
 - Assistant Administrator for Logistics
 - Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administrator
 - Chief Financial Officer
 - NIMAT Program
 - FCO Program
- One (1) Chair of the GSQRB (FQS Unit Chief, IWMO, Response Directorate)

The GSQRB will include the following non-voting representatives:

- Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer
- Office of Equal Rights
- Office of Chief Counsel
- Office of External Affairs
- Labor Management Partnership Council
- National Integration Center

6.3 Command Staff QRB (CSQRB)

The CSQRB will recommend the certification, decertification, and recertification of employees in the following Command Staff positions to the appropriate CA for final determination:

- Type I (except for FCOs and DRCOs, who are approved by FEMA Administrator)
- Type II
- Type III
- Officers
- Leads
- Advisors

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- Assistant External Affairs Officer

Command Staff positions not reviewed by a QRB will be reviewed by each program's CO, who will make qualification recommendations to the CA for final determination and issuance of qualification letters.

The CSQRB will consist of the following voting members selected by the Senior Program Leader for each identified office. Each will select an individual from their respective programs to serve a 2-year term. The individual selected must hold a current FQS title in a "typed" Command Staff position.

- Six (6) National Program Representatives (1 representative from each program):
 - Office of External Affairs
 - Office of Equal Rights
 - Office of Disability Integration and Coordination
 - Office of FCO Coordination
 - NIMAT Program
 - Office of Chief Counsel
- One (1) Chair of the CSQRB (FQS Unit Chief, IWMO, Response Directorate)

The CSQRB will include the following non-voting representatives:

- Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer
- Labor Management Partnership Council
- National Integration Center

7 Qualification Review Board General Requirements

QRBs will adhere to the following general requirements:

- QRBs will be comprised of permanent full-time (PFT), temporary full-time (TFT), and Cadre of On-Call Response and Recovery (CORE) employees in incident management and/or incident support positions
- QRB members will serve an initial 2-year term, which may be extended, and every effort will be made to ensure continuity of membership
- QRBs will, at a minimum, meet quarterly. The QRB may meet in a virtual mode (i.e., VTC, conference call, web meetings, etc.)

8 Qualification Process Under a QRB

8.1 Certification Process

The roles and responsibilities of each individual in the process, where a CA certifies an employee as “qualified” for an incident management or incident support position, are described in the steps below.

1. Once an employee completes a position task book (PTB), the **employee** will:
 - a. Prepare a certification package and deliver it to the RPM to include:
 - Completed copy of PTB
 - Certification of required training (certificates, training records)
 - Relevant position-specific incident performance appraisal(s)
 - Letter(s) of recommendation from other certified employee(s) with equal or higher qualifications (optional)
 - Training and experience record(s) of previous qualifications in an ICS organization(s) to include but not limited to:
 - ✓ Training certificate(s)
 - ✓ Incident evaluation(s)
 - ✓ Letter(s) from competent authority(s)
2. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Review the certification package for completeness
 - b. Forward the certification package to the CO using a *transmittal log*
3. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review and forward the certification package to the QRB chair
4. The **QRB** will:
 - a. Review and evaluate the certification package
 - b. Evaluate the overall quality of the employee experience(s) to include:
 - Scope of involvement in candidate position(s)
 - Complexity of incident(s)
 - Phase(s) of deployment(s) (response vs. recovery)
 - Pattern(s) of incident behavior that negatively impacts the operation/organization
 - c. Determine recommendation for certification
 - d. Prepare and send a *decision letter* to the CA for signature. If the decision is to not certify, the letter must contain appropriate rationale and recommended actions.
5. The **Certifying Authority** will:

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- a. Approve or disapprove QRB recommendation
 - b. Sign and send a *decision letter* to the employee through the CO
6. The **Certifying Official** will:
- a. Forward a *decision letter* to the RPM
7. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
- a. Send a *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Ensure certification information is entered in the Agency database

8.2 Recertification Process

Recertification is the re-qualification of an employee in an incident management or incident support position. Circumstances which lead to recertification:

- **Example # 1:** If an employee has not performed in his/her certified position or any position identified for maintaining currency within a 4-year period (the result of which will be immediate decertification)
- **Example # 2:** If an employee does not demonstrate competency in the position for which he/she is qualified, as reflected on written incident performance evaluation(s)
- **Example # 3:** If an employee has a lack of recurrent professional training and/or current license(s) or certification(s) identified on the Position Qualification Sheet (the result of which will be immediate decertification)

Example # 1: If an employee has not performed in his/her certified position or any position identified for maintaining currency within a 4-year period, the steps in the process are outlined below:

1. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Notify the CO that an employee has not performed in the certified position or any position for maintaining currency within a 4-year period
 - b. Decertify the employee in the Agency database
2. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Contact the employee and let him/her know that he/she has been decertified in the position due to currency requirements. If the employee agrees to recertification, the CO will explain the acceptable parameters for being recertified and send a *Recertification Form* to the employee. Parameters may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Issuance of a PTB and taking an incident “candidate” assignment(s) in the position from which the employee has been decertified
 - Taking or retaking required training related to the position

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

3. The **employee** will:
 - a. Agree that he/she is available for deployment following recertification
 - b. Understand recertification parameters and be available for a “candidate” assignment
4. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Notify the following personnel regarding decertification of the employee and the requirements for recertification:
 - RPM
 - QRB chair
 - CA
5. The **employee** will:
 - a. Upon completion of recertification parameters, submit recertification package to CO which will include the following:
 - **Mandatory**
 - ✓ Completed copy of *Recertification Form*
 - ✓ Relevant position-specific incident performance appraisal(s)
 - **If Required**
 - ✓ New position task book
 - ✓ Certification of training to meet parameters (certificates, professional or agency training records)
 - **If Available**
 - ✓ Previous position task book
 - **Optional**
 - ✓ Letter(s) of recommendation from other certified employee(s) with equal or higher qualifications (optional)
 - ✓ Training and experience record(s) of previous qualifications in an ICS organization(s) to include but not limited to:
 - Training certificate(s)
 - Incident evaluation(s)
 - Letter(s) from competent authority(s)
6. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review the employee recertification package for completeness
 - b. Forward recertification package to the QRB using a *transmittal log*
7. The **QRB** will:

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- a. Review the recertification package to ensure employee meets recertification parameters. The QRB should evaluate the quality of the experience obtained in the incident assignment(s) to include:
 - Scope of involvement in candidate position(s)
 - Complexity of incident(s)
 - Phase(s) of deployment(s) (response vs. recovery)
 - b. Determine recommendation for recertification
 - c. Prepare a *decision letter* addressed to the employee for CA signature. If the decision is to not recertify, the letter must contain appropriate rationale and recommended actions
8. The **Certifying Authority** will:
- a. Approve or disapprove the QRB recommendation
 - b. Sign and send a *decision letter* to the CO
9. The **Certifying Official** will:
- a. Send a *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Notify the RPM of the decision
 - c. Authorize the RPM to enter recertification information in the Agency database, if appropriate
10. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
- a. Ensure recertification information is entered in the Agency database, if appropriate

Example # 2: If an employee does not demonstrate competency in the position for which he/she is qualified as reflected on written incident performance evaluation(s), the steps below will be taken:

1. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Provide CO with the following material(s) using the *transmittal log*
 - Employee sub-standard⁶ incident performance evaluation and any other pertinent document(s) that reflect a lack of competent performance in the position for which he/she is qualified
 - Documentation of a pattern of performance that in totality demonstrates a lack of competency in the position for which he/she is qualified
2. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Send the QRB material(s) regarding employee documented lack of competent performance

⁶ Incident performance by an employee is judged sub-standard when the employee fails to perform the job for which he/she is qualified in accordance with FQS.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

3. The **QRB** will:
 - a. Review materials and make recommendation to the CA
 - b. If employee decertification is not recommended, notify the CA. If the CA agrees with the recommendation, notify the CO and RPM. No official notification to the employee is required since no action was taken.
 - c. If recommendation is to decertify the employee, the QRB will provide the CA with one of the following options:
 - Provide recommended parameters to recertify employee in current position by sending a *Recertification Form* **OR**
 - Send a *decision letter* with one of the options below, to include rationale
 - ✓ Certify in a subordinate position
 - ✓ Decertify with a recommendation to appropriate organization element for further administrative action
 - d. If further information is required to make a recommendation:
 - Notify employee, CO, and RPM that an inquiry is being initiated. Document the notification.
 - Conduct an inquiry to include but not be limited to:
 - ✓ Interview(s)
 - ✓ Request(s) for further documentation
4. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Approve or disapprove recommendation
 - b. Sign and send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the CO
5. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Notify the RPM of decision
 - Send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the employee through the RPM
 - If the decision is to decertify the employee, authorize the RPM to enter information in the Agency database
6. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send a *Recertification Form* or *decision letter* to the employee
 - b. Ensure decertification information is entered in the agency database, if appropriate

Example # 3: If an employee has a lack of recurrent professional training and/or current license(s) or certification(s) as identified on the Position Qualification Sheet, the steps below will be taken:

1. The **employee** will:
 - a. Notify the RPM when professional status changes which is due, but not limited to:

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

- Lapse in recurrent training
 - Lapse in certification requirements
 - Disciplinary actions which affect professional status
2. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Document notification of the employee change in professional status
 - b. Notify the CO of change in the employee professional status
 3. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Authorize the RPM to decertify the employee in the Agency database pending the outcome of recertification
 - b. Notify the following personnel regarding the decertification of the employee and requirements for recertification:
 - QRB chair
 - CA
 4. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Decertify employee in the agency database upon authorization of the CO
 - b. Notify employee that he/she has been decertified in the position due to professional status requirements
 - c. Send a *Recertification Form* to the employee identifying the acceptable parameters for being recertified, which may include but not be limited to the following:
 - Updating professional education requirements
 - Producing appropriate professional license(s) or certificate(s)
 5. The **employee** will:
 - a. Send materials regarding the reinstatement of professional status to RPM
 6. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send recertification materials to the CO
 7. The **Certifying Official** will:
 - a. Review and validate the recertification materials for currency and recertify
 - b. Notify the RPM of the recertification and authorize employee recertification in the Agency database
 8. The **Reservist Program Manager** will:
 - a. Contact the employee regarding the recertification decision
 - b. Enter the recertification information in the Agency database

8.3 Reconsideration Process

Reconsideration is a process that begins with an employee requesting consideration of a decision by a CA with the intent of reversing or modifying the current incident qualification decision. A reconsideration decision by a CA is final.

An employee may request reconsideration of a CA's decision by submitting a written request within 60 days after receipt of the CA's decision.

The CA will submit a response to an employee's reconsideration request within 60 days of receipt. The response will be sent via registered mail.

1. The **employee** will:
 - a. Include in his/her reconsideration request:⁷
 - Any supporting documentation that clarifies or amplifies originally submitted documents
 - Any new documentation that supports claim for competency
2. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Review the request for reconsideration and:
 - Affirm the original decision **OR**
 - Reverse the original decision **OR**
 - Refer the reconsideration to the QRB for review and recommendation:
3. If referred, the **Qualification Review Board** will:
 - a. Review the request
 - b. Provide a recommendation to the CA
4. The **Certifying Authority** will:
 - a. Review the QRB recommendation and:
 - Affirm the original decision **OR**
 - Reverse the original decision
 - b. Send a *decision letter* to the employee through the RPM
 - If a decision is to reverse the original finding, notify the CO and authorize the RPM to enter the information in the Agency database

⁷ All documentation submitted may only address the rationale used to support the CA's original decision.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

5. The **Program Manager** will:
 - a. Send a *decision letter* to the employee via registered mail
 - b. If original decision is reversed, ensure the information is entered in the Agency database

Appendix A – Glossary

Candidate	A FEMA Qualification System (FQS)-qualified individual who has been selected by the Certifying Official to open a new position task book for a higher FQS title. The individual remains a candidate until he/she completes the entire process and receives a new FQS qualification letter.
Certification	The validation and affirmation of the qualification process for a FEMA disaster position.
Certifying Authority (CA)	A FEMA official authorized by the FEMA Administrator to certify that employees are qualified for certain FEMA Qualification System positions. Each Program will have a single CA. The CA will be the highest ranking FEMA official in each Program.
Certifying Official (CO)	The individual delegated authority by the Certifying Authority to issue position task books and certify individual qualifications for specific positions.
Decertification	The process of taking away the incident qualification of an employee.
Director of Disaster Operations (DDO)	A senior FEMA official designated by the FEMA Administrator to coordinate and synchronize all Headquarters activities for credible threats and during major disaster or emergency activations. The DDO provides operational guidance and direction to the Chief of the National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS).
Disaster Workforce	Individuals assigned to perform disaster-related duties in FEMA disaster operations.
FEMA Qualification System (FQS)	A performance-based system that qualifies and certifies FEMA employees for disaster-related positions.
Final Evaluator	The official responsible for signing the verification statement that all tasks have been certified in a trainee/candidate's position task book by an evaluator and recommending that the trainee/candidate be considered for certification in the position.
Force Structure	A systematic determination of the organization and human assets required to perform a given mission or function.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

Incident Command System (ICS)	A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations.
Incident Level	The level for which control of FEMA incident operations, including the Federal resources deployed to an incident and the establishment of a Unified Coordination Group, is delegated to the Federal Coordinating Officer or Federal Resource Coordinator.
Incident Management	The incident-level operation of the Federal role in emergency response recovery, logistics, and mitigation. Responsibilities in incident management include the direct control and employment of resources, management of incident offices, operations, and delivery of Federal assistance through all phases of emergency response.
Incident Management and Support Keystone	A FEMA document that establishes the foundational doctrine that guides the Agency's conduct of disaster operations including those undertaken based on a threat, in anticipation of, or preparation for, a significant event, or in response to an incident that has already occurred.
Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT)	A National Incident Management System/Incident Command System-compliant, self-sufficient, highly mobile, rapidly deployable emergency response team organized and equipped to effectively manage all Federal support to a State, tribal, territorial, or local government during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other manmade disasters. For Stafford Act incidents, the primary mission of an IMAT is to organize and manage a coordinated and successful response and recovery operation to meet the emergent needs of State and local jurisdictions.
Incident Management Typed Positions	Positions for which different qualification levels called types have been established that reflect the size and complexity of the incident, based on FEMA incident levels, in which the employee is required to perform. Typed positions include Federal Coordinating Officers and Command and General Staff positions, which are typed at levels I, II, and III to coincide with Level I, II, and III incidents; and Branch Director positions, which are typed at levels I and II. An employee who is qualified for a typed position may fill his/her position in any incident level at or below his/her type. For example, type I staff members may be assigned to Level I, II, or III incidents; while type III employees may not be assigned to Level I or II incidents (except as a trainee/candidate for a higher typed position).

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

Incident Support	The coordination of all Federal resources that support emergency response, recovery, logistics, and mitigation. Responsibilities include the deployment of national-level assets, support of national objectives and programs affected during the disaster, and support of incident operations with resources, expertise, information, and guidance.
Mentor/Evaluator	An individual certified by FEMA as an evaluator, who is qualified in the position being evaluated, and is assigned at an incident to mentor and/or evaluate a trainee/candidate's performance. For tasks completed in a simulated environment (classroom, exercise, or simulation), successful completion of each task is documented by the instructor or assigned evaluator. A mentor/evaluator is usually the same person providing instruction as a "mentor" and subsequently evaluating the performance as an "evaluator."
Position Qualification Sheet	A written document that identifies required experience, training, and external certification (if any) for a given position.
Position Task Book (PTB)	A manual that lists the critical behaviors/activities and tasks required to become certified for a given incident management or incident support position. PTBs are designed in a format that allows documentation of a trainee/candidate's performance of specific tasks. Successful completion of all tasks in the PTB, as determined by an authorized evaluator, is the basis for recommending the trainee/candidate for certification in the position.
Program	Organizational grouping of FEMA employees by operational function for the purpose of position management, recruitment, and readiness to participate in disaster-related activities.
Qualification Review Board (QRB)	A group of experienced personnel appointed to review individual qualification recommendations prior to approval by the Certifying Authority. Members of a QRB must be qualified for the positions being reviewed.
Qualified	A rating awarded to employees for incident management or incident support positions based on demonstration of proficiency to perform all tasks and completion of required experience, training, and any external credentials required for given positions. Individuals are considered qualified when they receive a qualification letter from their CA.
Recertification	The process of reinstating the qualifications of an employee.
Reconsideration	A process of reviewing a decision by a Certifying Authority, based on a trainee/candidate's request, with the view of reversing or modifying the requester's incident qualification status.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Evaluator's Guide

Reservist Program Manager (RPM)	A FEMA employee who is responsible for developing policies and procedures specific to programs. RPMs monitor the readiness of their program and provide assistance to FEMA Regions, as needed.
Subject-Matter Expert (SME)	A person who is an expert in a particular area or topic.
Subordinate Job Title	A job title that falls under an employee's FQS primary job title in the career progression chart. Subordinate job titles do not count against force structure numbers.
Trainee	An individual that has an open PTB for an entry-level position. A trainee does not hold any FQS qualification.

Appendix B – Sample FQS Transmittal Log

FQS TRANSMITTAL LOG		
ORIGINATOR (Name, org)	Date	Phone
TO: (Name, department, room number, building, mailing address as applicable)	Date of Receipt	Phone
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
Contents: (what is being transmitted)		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
REMARKS:		

Appendix C – Sample Recertification Form

RECERTIFICATION FORM

TO

Employee _____

FROM

Certifying Official _____ OR

Certifying Authority _____

Please check the box below that applies to the employee's need to recertify:

- Currency
- Competency
- Recurrent Training
- Current license(s)/certificate(s)

Check boxes that apply to parameters

PARAMETERS FOR RECERTIFICATION

Assignment(s)	{ Incident Performance Appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>
	{ Other materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	{ Certificate(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Requirement(s)	{ Copy of license(s) or certificate(s) or copy of recurrent training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reissue Position Task Book	{ Completed PTB	<input type="checkbox"/>
	{ Incident Performance Appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other		

Appendix D – Sample Qualification Decision



[insert date]

MEMORANDUM TO: [Employee Name and Organization]
THROUGH: [Certifying Authority over the position being reviewed]
FROM: [Name and Mailing Address of Approving Official]
SUBJECT: Qualification Decision

This is to inform you that after a careful review of the documentation submitted on your behalf a decision has been made regarding your employee qualification status. Refer to checked box.

Certified as 'qualified'
You have been found 'qualified' for a position. Your qualification card is attached. This is an important card. Protect it. Bring it with you when deployed.

Not-qualified (See Rationale and Reconsideration below)

RATIONALE: (Attach additional sheet(s), if needed)

RECONSIDERATION:

If you do not agree with this decision, you must submit a written request for reconsideration addressed to the person whose name appears in the 'From' block within 60 days of receipt of the decision. Your request must include a detailed explanation of why you do not agree with the decision. It should include any supporting documentation that clarifies or amplifies your objection to the rationale used to support the original decision.

Appendix E – Sample Recertification/Decertification Decision



[insert date]

MEMORANDUM TO: [Employee Name and Organization]
THROUGH: [Certifying Authority over the position being reviewed]
FROM: [Name and Mailing Address of Approving Official]
SUBJECT: Qualification Decision

This is to inform you that after a careful review of the documentation submitted on your behalf a decision has been made regarding your employee qualification status. Refer to checked box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Recertified You have met the identified parameters for recertification in the following position(s). Your status in Agency database has been appropriately adjusted. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Decertified (See Rationale and Reconsideration below) You have been decertified in the following incident management position(s). _____
RATIONALE: (If appropriate, include information regarding decision to qualify employee in a subordinate position, or recommendation for further administrative action) (Attach additional sheet(s), if needed)
RECONSIDERATION: If you do not agree with this decision, you must submit a written request for reconsideration addressed to the person whose name appears in the 'From' block within 60 days of receipt of the decision. Your request must include a detailed explanation of why you do not agree with the decision. It should include any supporting documentation that clarifies or amplifies your objection to the rationale used to support the original decision.

Appendix F – Sample Reconsideration Decision

U.S. Department of Homeland
Security
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472



FEMA

[insert date]

MEMORANDUM TO: [Employee Name and Organization]
THROUGH: [Certifying Authority over the position being reviewed]
FROM: [Name and Mailing Address of Approving Official]
SUBJECT: Qualification Decision

This is to inform you that after a careful review of the documentation submitted on your behalf a decision has been made regarding your employee qualification status. Refer to checked box.

Reconsideration

Based on a review of documentation and/or rationale provided the following decision is rendered:

Affirm original decision (See Rationale below)

Reverse original decision

You have been found qualified in the following position. Your status in Agency database has been appropriately adjusted.

RATIONALE: (Attach additional sheet(s), if needed)