

**INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGY**

**POLICY MANUAL**

**Table of Contents**

**INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGY (IBFN) POLICY MANUAL.....4**

**PURPOSE STATEMENT OF BOARD.....4**

**GOVERNANCE.....4**

**EDUCATION & TRAINING FOR CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY: .....6**

**FINANCIAL: .....7**

**INCOME:.....7**

**ACCOUNTING:.....7**

**CONTRACTS: .....8**

**HUMAN RESOURCES: .....8**

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES: .....8**

**PROGRAM: .....9**

**THE POLICY MANUAL AND PROCEDURE MANUAL WILL BE REVIEWED AT LEAST ANNUALLY.....9**

**CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: .....10**

**GRANDFATHERING:.....11**

**USE OF TRADEMARKS: .....11**

**ISSUING OF FELLOWSHIP STATUS: .....11**

**RECORD RETENTION POLICY:.....12**

**CONFIDENTIALITY POLICIES: .....12**

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS: .....12**

**AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL: .....12**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:.....14**

**SECURITY:.....14**

**PANEL COMPOSITION: .....15**

**JOB TASK ANALYSIS (JTA): .....15**

**EXAMINATION SPECIFICATIONS:.....17**

**1. OBJECTIVE OF THE EXAMINATION .....17**

**3. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSTRUCT(S) AND ITEM TYPES TO BE USED.....17**

**EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT: .....18**

**THE FOLLOWING STEPS ARE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF IFNB EXAMINATIONS: .....18**

**STANDARD SETTING:.....18**

**THE STANDARD-SETTING REPORT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING: .....19**

**EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION:.....19**  
**SCORING AND SCORE REPORTING: .....20**  
**RELIABILITY:.....21**  
**EXAMINATION SCORE EQUATING:.....21**  
**MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION:.....22**  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE:.....22**  
**MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION:.....23**

## **International Board of Functional Neurology (IBFN) Policy Manual**

### **Purpose Statement of Board**

The purpose of the International Board of Functional Neurology (IBFN) is to certify individuals in the following healthcare professions in the practice of Functional Neurology and its subspecialties within the scope of practice of each respective license or educational certification. Professionals trained in Functional Neurology from College and/or University programs accredited by the United States (U.S.) Department of Education or the Department of Education of foreign governments or affiliated with U.S. accredited Colleges or Universities are eligible to sit for the IFNB examinations. No student from an unaccredited private academy or institute may apply to sit for the examinations. Each healthcare professional must hold a license to practice in his/her field as indicated by the laws of the land in which that individual practices (i.e. state or federal licenses in states, provinces, countries). These are the professionals who are currently eligible to sit, given the appropriate education:

Medical Doctors, Doctors of Osteopathy, Doctors of Chiropractic, Doctors of Naturopathy, Clinical Nurse Practitioners, Doctors of Physical Therapy, Licensed Neuropsychologists and Licensed/Certified Educators. The International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation, Inc. (IAFNR) will determine additional professions eligible for certification.

Doctors of Philosophy (neuroscience, education, research) may also sit for the examination even if they do not hold a clinical license to participate in the research and development of evidence-based practice development of the field.

### **Governance**

The initial Board of Directors will be appointed by the IAFNR board of directors and will serve for one (1) year, two (2) years or three (3) years, so a rotating cycle of three (3) year terms can be initiated. Once the first full certification exam is completed and there are enough certificants, all members of the Board, except the Public Member, are to be derived from that body of certificants in a manner that is balanced in content for the number of individual professions represented. The selection of the Directors from the registry of certificants is based upon the number of certificants in each of the professional fields (M.D., D.O., D.C., N.P., N.D., D.P.T., Ph.D.). One (1) position will rotate among the certificants in the smaller (by number) fields until enough certificants justify adding additional Director positions. The determination of "larger" versus "smaller" professional fields will be based on a percentage of total certificants with ten percent (10%) or more consisting of "larger" and ten percent (10%) or less consisting of "smaller".

Within six (6) years of inception, the election of Directors from the certificant body will begin with nominations submitted to the IAFNR parent organization and specific requirements for non-conflict of interest and background checks performed. All members of the Board of

Directors must submit to bonding. Each year, the current President of the Board and the new elected Directors will attend the Institute for Credentialing Excellence annual conference for training as Board members. Additional training for non-profit Board of Directors will be provided on an annual basis and is mandatory for IBFN Directors.

The Public Member may be appointed upon recommendation from the Citizens Advocacy Center since this individual must have no affiliation by family relationship, employment or financial arrangement (other than that of a patient) to any Functional Neurologist in any of the fields or anyone taking the training to become affiliated. Further, it is recommended that the Public Member have no relationship to the licensing boards related to any of the professions involved in IBFN.

The IBFN will initially consist of seven (7) members and will elect the following officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer from those members. Any of the seven (7) members of the Board of Directors are eligible to become an officer. All seven (7) members of the board (nine (9) as it increases) are full voting members.

Once appointed, the IBFN functions autonomously from the IAFNR Board for certification activities. After the IBFN is elected from a body of certificants, the support from the parent organization IAFNR will decrease to an advisory capacity with accounting and clerical support. The IBFN will set eligibility standards; standards for initial certification and maintaining certification; disciplinary determinations; the development, administration and scoring of examinations; and the selection of subject-matter experts (SMEs). This will be independent of the IAFNR after a body of certified practitioners have completed the examination. Independence of the Board of Directors from all administrators and educators involved in the training accepted by the IBFN is considered critical for maintaining autonomy of the program.

Subspecialty programs such as Childhood Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, Electrodiagnostics or sectional certification programs limited to one profession such as Naturopathy must also have Board of Director certification in at least a rotating fashion. All directors must agree to a background check and agree to be bonded.

The IBFN primary operations official is the Executive Director (ED). The ED is an Ex Officio member with voice but no vote. The ED facilitates or assists all certification committees. Please refer to job descriptions in the Procedure Manual. The ED must agree to a background check and agree to be bonded.

The IBFN will have an annual face-to-face meeting at the IAFNB annual conference. This meeting will be posted on the IBFN website and the IAFNR website as a public announcement. If extreme circumstances prevent a board member from attending in person, he/she may attend virtually. This meeting is open to the certificant body.

Quarterly meetings may be held virtually. The President may call special meetings at the request of any Board member or the ED. The Board of Directors may vote on issues via email unless an issue is contested, then a virtual meeting will be called by the President. Individuals such as consultants or experts may be specially invited to attend any virtual meeting. These meetings will be announced at least ten (10) days in advance and may be open or closed to the certificant body or the public. Minutes of all open meetings are posted for the public once approved by the IBFN. The Secretary of the Board must submit minutes to the entire IBFN within forty-eight (48) hours after each meeting. Either the Secretary of the Board or the Executive Director may take the minutes or an online program that transcribes minutes may be utilized. A summary of decisions is made available to the IAFNR and the certificant body.

If any Director misses more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the meetings, quarterly or special, he or she shall resign from the Board or be removed unless extenuating circumstances, such as illness prohibits attendance in person or virtually.

### **Education & Training for Candidate Eligibility:**

Eligibility requirements for initial certification include:

1. Appropriate license or certification to practice or perform research in the professional field;
2. Post graduate education (in addition to that required for licensure) in neurology with an emphasis on functional neurology from an accredited college or university. Accreditation must be through the Department of Education of the United States or that equivalent in other countries;
3. Twelve (12) months of practice in the licensed clinical area with an emphasis on neurology;
4. Recommended number of post graduate hours is at least three hundred (300). All educational institutions providing post graduate education provided the Job Task Analysis summary for their curriculum design;
5. Clear license without restriction as indicated by the following:
  - a. No licensure history of limitation, suspension, revocation, denial, sanctions or under probationary conditions;
  - b. No clinical privilege has been limited, suspended, revoked, denied or subjected to probationary condition or sanctions based on the actions of the applicant, not by any limitation related to scope of practice either by law or by the restrictions of the healthcare organization or practice venue;
  - c. No limitation, suspension, revocation, failure of renewal, sanction or probationary condition imposed in any practice venue related to the applicant's behavior or practice;
  - d. No limitation, suspension, revocation, nonrenewal or probation applied to any professional organization membership except for the choice of the applicant to resign from said professional organization;
6. The applicant must have a clear societal record as demonstrated by the following:
  - a. No felony conviction;
  - b. No mental health issues or addiction issues that impair judgment and practice for patient safety;
  - c. No malpractice judgments against the applicant in the last five (5) years;

7. Formal agreement to adhere to all professional and ethical codes of conduct as indicated in the application and in the professional code of ethics for the given profession;
8. Letters of reference regarding professional competence and character as follows:
  - a. Two (2) letters of recommendation from licensed healthcare professionals familiar with the applicant's work confirming the competency of the practitioner and the degree to which the practitioner is practicing functional neurology;
  - b. Only one (1) letter may be from a licensed healthcare professional partner;
  - c. A second letter must be from a licensed healthcare professional not in partnership with the applicant (may be faculty, referring practitioner, etc.);
  - d. Letters from relatives will not be accepted;
  - e. Refer to the formal application for further details. Also, refer to the Procedure manual for further information.

### **Financial:**

#### **Income:**

The certification examination fees and the annual continuing certification dues are the primary income for the IBFN. Accounting practices will be in accord with non-profit accounting principles and annual reports will be posted for public access. The fee for the examinations is set annually as is the fee for continuing certification and recertification.

#### **Accounting:**

- A. Initially, the parent organization will manage the accounting and bill paying with review by the IBFN Treasurer and Executive Director or fiscal manager.
- B. All fiscal policies involving both the parent organization and the IBFN will be reviewed and approved in a joint meeting between the two boards with each requiring a quorum at the session and both Executive Directors present.
- C. Annual budgets will be developed by the IBFN with input from the Executive Director and the IBFN Treasurer. A fiscal consultant may be utilized to advise on budget development. Quarterly Reports will be posted for the IBFN to compare budget to actual and sent to the parent organization Board of Directors.
- D. An independent accountant will complete all tax filings, and the tax report for the IBFN will be available to the public in accord with non-profit laws.
- E. Once the IBFN is functioning with fiscal autonomy from the parent organization, the accounts will undergo independent audits by a certified auditor with experience in non-profit accounting and will adhere to recommendations from the auditor(s). At that time, the IBFN and IAFNR may determine to transfer the accounting to the IBFN.

Note: Current IAFNR membership fees:

Member ship fees are set annually. Currently, student fees are \$175.00 and professional fees are \$295 annually or \$500 for two (2) years. International membership is \$375 per year. These fees do not reflect examination fees or annual dues for Fellows to the IBFN.

**Contracts:**

All contracts must be approved by the IBFN in writing. For expenditures, such as software licenses, the ED may expend up to \$500.00 without board vote for annual software contracts such as Survey Monkey, FileMaker Pro or other approved software. Expenditures over \$500.00 require the approval of at least one IBFN Director. Any expenditure over \$1000.00 requires full IBFN Board of Directors approval and be recorded in minutes.

**Human Resources:**

- A. The Executive Director oversees the day-to-day certification activities of the IBFN. This individual is contracted and must have at least five (5) years in the certification industry including the development and submission of documents leading to National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accreditation.
- B. Psychometrician services are contracted by the IBFN upon the recommendation of the ED to review psychometric results.
- C. The ED will maintain resumes on all contracted staff, volunteers and consultants. Initially, the only staff is the Executive Director.

**Information for Candidates:**

The Candidate Handbook developed by the IBFN is published annually via the Internet and updated as needed. Included in this Handbook are the following documents:

- A. Eligibility information.
- B. Application forms.
- C. Job Task Analysis (JTA) and blueprints for the examination. Blueprints are derived from the JTA and published in a summary format.
- D. A description of the examinations leading to each certification program.
- E. A description of the process of the examinations including modes of administration, time limitations, etc.
- F. A procedure by which a candidate may request reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These accommodations are granted unless it is deemed that the individual's disability would place patients at risk. Examples of reasonable accommodations will be included in the Candidate Handbook.
- G. The IBFN does not discriminate against candidates per national citizenship, race, creed, gender, sexual preference, profession or disability (see ADA above). Further, candidates are not discriminated against per education if the University or College providing it is accredited through a national Department of Education.
- H. Candidates not passing the examination may retake the examination two (2) times before being required to retake coursework in the areas of weakness as indicated on their score reports.



- I. If a candidate chooses, he/she may appeal the certification decision and have an independent body of certificant either uphold the original decision or reverse it. This is dependent upon the type of the examination. If the examination format is a performance examination, it will be video recorded, and a new set of trained reviewers who do not know the candidate will review and regrade the performance as demonstrated on the video recording. The second ruling will stand. If the examination is an objective written examination, psychometric analysis determines reliability, and the standard setting panel sets the decision criteria. The IBFN reviews their decision and may choose to raise it or lower it by the Standard Error of the Measurement (SEM). Any deviation from the Standard Setting Panel must be fully documented with rationale.
- J. Annual reports of the statistics regarding the examination(s) and the pass/fail rate (percentage, not the score) is published on the IAFNR and IBFN websites. Individual breakdowns will be posted to the various educational programs with an analysis of the general strengths and weaknesses of the candidates trained under their specific program. The annual report of examination results includes the number of individuals certified under each program.

### **Program:**

The Policy manual and procedure manual will be reviewed at least annually.

Candidate Policies regarding the examinations are recommended by the Executive Director or a consultant familiar with certification guidelines from National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) or International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The ED will write the policies and forward them to the IBFN Board of Directors for approval. These policies include exam eligibility, ADA accommodations, exam eligibility appeals, educational waiver appeals, examination appeal of decision, score reporting, test re-taking, Candidate Handbook, job task analysis, psychometric analysis of examination data, standard setting, test development, subject matter experts and any other policies regarding certification or continuing certification. No candidate will be restricted in taking the examination because of membership or non-membership in any organization. No candidate will be required to use or purchase any specific brand of products required to be used in clinical practice or during the examination. However, if the candidate does not bring his/her own equipment, whatever equipment is provided for the performance examination must be used.

Maintaining certification requires that each Fellow maintain high ethical standards. Disciplinary actions for Fellows failing to adhere to the professional ethics may include revocation of the IBFN Fellow certification or probation of the certification or educational remediation in ethics with follow-up by another Fellow. Any disciplinary action will be reported to the licensing board that covers the Fellow's clinical license. Anyone accusing a Fellow of an ethical violation must complete the complaint form in writing and attest to the truthfulness of the accusation. No complaints will be taken verbally, via telephone or in email. Complaints are regarded as confidential. However, the complainant must recognize that the Fellow will be informed so that

he/she may respond to the complaint with documentation. If the complaint is deemed as “non-frivolous” by the Executive Director, the complaint will be forwarded to the IBFN and an ethics committee composed of Fellows, the Public Member and the Executive Director will convene. The timeline for all complaints is included in the Procedure Manual and on the complaint form.

**Candidate Eligibility requirements:**

Each program for certification by the IBFN will have minimum qualifications for candidates taking the examination. The reason to have minimum qualifications is that the IBFN programs are advanced, post-graduate and post-licensure training for healthcare practitioners. To permit candidates without licensure to take the exam would not protect the public, and to permit individuals without Department of Education accredited post-licensure training to take the examination would present an unfair burden on such individuals. However, should some individuals appeal the post-graduate/post-licensure training, the IBFN may choose to allow, on a case-by-case basis, to waive the post-licensure education. This waiver request requires extensive documentation of experience and additional appropriate education. However, no waiver will alter the candidate’s obligation to take all portions of the examination and to meet the Standard for the decision criteria.

The retesting of candidates who fail to meet the Standard criteria for the examination may retake the examination two (2) times within a three (3) year period. If the candidate continues to fail the examination, the IBFN may recommend that the candidate retake a certain number of hours in the areas of that individual’s identified weaknesses or spend a certain amount of time of instruction with a certified mentor. Any candidate failing to pass the exam after this remediation will need to retake a full course of study prior to sitting for the examination again.

Requests for reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities will be honored, in as far as possible, in accord with patient safety. Each candidate requesting a special accommodation must complete the ADA request application and submit it with his/her application for examination. The Executive Director will review the request and evaluate it per ADA laws. Then, if approved on initial review, the ED will forward to the IFNB Directors for final review and approval. Directors will review with specific emphasis for patient safety. The candidate will be notified of approval of modification. The candidate will be responsible for providing personal assistive equipment such as specially equipped stethoscope for a clinician with hearing loss or a page reader for a candidate with vision difficulties. Each candidate must request the specific accommodation that he/she requires. Supporting documentation regarding the need may be required from the candidate’s doctor or therapist.

English as a Second Language (ESL) accommodation may be requested as the exam is, at least initially, only provided in English. The accommodation is limited to an extended time to take the examination. No translator is permitted. The Job Task Analysis document and Candidate Handbook will include reference material used for the examination and will be helpful for all candidates and especially non-native English speakers to use in examination preparation. This

accommodation is in accord with the American Psychological Associations recommendations for ESL accommodation.

Requests for any waivers or appeals will be included in the Candidate Handbook and published on the IAFNR and IBFN websites. Links to downloads for pdf formatted documents will be included.

### **Grandfathering:**

No candidate may be grandfathered into Fellow status for certification. All interested professionals will apply to take the examination and demonstrate licensure, functional neurology preparation and experience. Then, upon acceptance as a candidate, take the neurology written and performance examinations. The initial examination test development and standard setting committees shall complete the application and subsequently develop items in accord with the job task analysis (JTA). This work will grant the committee members a three-year certification; however, each must take the full examination within that three-year period. The initial committee members may not participate in any test committee during the two previous years and the year of his/her recertification examination. In that way, the IBFN can assure the public that every Fellow has been evaluated for knowledge, skills and/or abilities in accord with the standards set by the organization. Each subspecialty Fellowship will be subject to this same initial test development process. The Fellows who take the examination are granted a five (5) year certification. Those acquiring the certification by their contributed work are granted a three (3) year certification.

### **Use of Trademarks:**

Each certification program of the IFNB has a legal trademark emblem. Only those achieving and maintaining Fellow status may use the trademark. This trademark is not to be used in commercial marketing endeavors unrelated to the simple attestation that this practitioner has achieved the Fellow status through demonstration of knowledge, skills and abilities as assessed by the IBFN examination process. All legal means will be utilized for inappropriate use of the trademark symbol potentially including prosecution.

### **Issuing of Fellowship status:**

The IBFN provides the certification testing for a variety of programs and sub-specialty programs by examination only. This is the only means of obtaining the Fellow status for each of these programs. These examinations are duly constructed from JTA of the field and item construction by subject matter experts. A different group of subject matter experts sets the standards for the pass/fail decision for each examination in accord with accepted psychometric theory. A psychometric analysis is performed on each exam and each form of the exam (where more than one form exists) to assure reliability and equity among forms. The psychometric process for determining form equity is termed equating. Item analysis is performed to identify items do not

meet psychometric standards upon statistical analysis or items that are inappropriately written and provide no real information as to candidate ability.

### **Record Retention Policy:**

The IBFN will maintain records of all individual's applications, candidate examination scores, recertification records, appeals, complaints, ethics violations and all other Fellow/candidate documents. The Fellow documents will be maintained indefinitely for those maintaining recertification and for seven (7) years for those failing to maintain Fellow status. All candidate data will be maintained for seven (7) years for those not passing the examination. The IFNB will publish the directory of certificants on the IFNB website including each Fellow's number. Only those maintaining active and in good standing status will be listed on the published directory.

Document retention regarding JTA, test item banking, standard setting and psychometric analysis of each examination will be maintained for a minimum of fifteen (15) years. Curriculum Vitae of all Subject Matter Experts, consultants, Board of Directors and officers will be maintained for ten (10) years. All minutes, corporate documents and financial records will be maintained for no less than ten (10) years. The annual report of examination statistics and financial reports will be published on the IBFN website.

All records will be in electronic format with backup on three (3) secure platforms. Item banking will be maintained in electronic format with security and fire wall protection in accord with Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act (HIPPA) regulations and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Standards Association (IEEE Standards Association). Each year a permanent record of the activities of the IBFN will be burned onto a disk and stored in a fire proof safe or a bank safety deposit box. Records will be shared through secure cloud based mechanisms such as ShareFile, Box or FileMaker cloud.

### **Confidentiality Policies:**

#### **Confidentiality Agreements:**

All staff, certification board members, proctors, examiners, consultants and vendors, SMEs and applicants/certificants must sign confidentiality or nondisclosure agreements. These will be maintained on record and enforced for protection of privileged information for current and prospective certificants. Everything will be scanned and maintained electronically for five (5) years or the life cycle of each examination, whichever is longer.

#### **Authorized Personnel:**

The ED of the BIFN has access to all confidential examination, applicant, candidate and Fellow information. The IBFN board has access to portions of this information but not the examination in its final form. SMEs in the standard setting have access to the completed examination only

during the committee workshop. The applicant, candidate and Fellow privacy is maintained and the public database includes only that information that will assist the public in acquiring a Fellow for treatment purposes. Other information, such as scores and number of times the examination has been taken or retaken, remains confidential. All data is stored electronically on a secure database with password protection. Each candidate or Fellow may have password protected access to portions of his or her information to edit that information. Examination information available to the candidate or Fellow is limited to the score report and the pass/fail determination. No candidate or Fellow may have access to his/her completed examination or have access to the answer key. Access to individual records containing unpublished information is restricted to the applicant, candidate, Fellow or authorized personnel unless express written permission is obtained to release any part of the information or unless a court order or other legal process requires the release of such information. All Fellows must approve the public listing of their information in writing and are responsible for updating this information for the website.

The personnel with access to confidential examination items are restricted from sitting for the examination. All SMEs involved in the preparation and standard setting for a given examination may not take that examination for three (3) years. This insures that they take an examination that is different from the one they assisted in developing.

No personnel involved in the development of the examination or having access to any of the confidential items may be involved in developing or delivering preparatory courses or materials for three (3) years after access has ended. No IBFN Board Director may be involved in developing or delivering preparatory courses or materials until at least three (3) years after his/her final day as a Director.

Confidential examination development documents include the detailed JTA, candidate information, proposed or selected examination items and item banks, confidential examination administration information, confidential examination construction information and/or item-level psychometric information related to the examination.

The summaries of job analyses and aggregate examination results are publicly available on the website. Upon the discretion of the IBFN Directors, the detailed JTA may be made available to stakeholders such as preparatory educational providers.

The confidential and nondisclosure agreements are signed by both the individual covered by the agreement and the individual executing the agreement. All persons signing the agreements will receive training in exactly what is covered by the agreement, the rationale for the agreement and the consequences to the individual and to the IBFN for violation of the agreement. The Procedure Manual includes examples of all confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements.

All proctor/examiner and vendor/consultants will undergo training as outlined by the Proctor Manual, Examiner Manual and consultant contracts. These are renewed with each examination

cycle. These individuals are not eligible to take the examination for the three (3) years following examination development involvement.

Candidates are also required to sign nondisclosure agreements and may be prohibited from retaking the examination if it is proven that a candidate violated confidentiality regarding the examination. Further, violation of confidentiality may be treated as cheating and permanently prohibit certification.

### **Conflict of Interest:**

The IBFN maintains a record of signed conflict of interest agreements with all personnel involved in certification decisions or examination development, implementation, maintenance, delivery and updating. These agreements are enforced by the IBFN. Qualifications for personnel serving as proctor, examiner or judge for any examination are delineated in each of the appropriate training manuals and published on the website. The IBFN may recuse any individual from participating in certain tasks, discussions or decisions if there is a conflict of interest in a particular circumstance but not in their overall capacity to serve. For example, an examiner may be recused from examining an individual who is practicing or has practiced under that examiner or who has been mentored by that examiner.

The IBFN Board of Directors are held to a strict Conflict of Interest standard. None may participate in the development of the preparatory materials. None may serve as an examiner for any candidate known to the Board member. The Board member must hold the Fellow certification to serve as an examiner but may serve as a proctor three (3) years prior to taking the examination during the initial phase of examination development for a new credential. The IBFN Directors not holding a credential, such as the public member, must sign conflict of interest statements if serving as an examination proctor or administrator. All contract consultants must also sign Conflict of Interest Statements and Non-Compete Statements regarding the examinations administered by the IBFN.

Conflict of Interest is defined as a vested interest, either clear, potential or perceived in the outcome of any examination or the performance of any candidate. Further, any individual with a clear, potential or perceived conflict of interest may not serve on the Board of Directors or as a proctor, examiner, judge or examination developer. All financial agreements between IBFN Board of Directors and preparatory Education providers must be disclosed.

### **Security:**

The IBFN maintains all candidate and examination information in a secure electronic format using state-of-the-art encryption and password protected databases. All policies and procedures regarding security are reviewed annually. Item security is maintained via secure web-based item development workshops or in person workshops with all items retained by the ED. No individual is permitted to leave the workshop area with an item. Item banking is maintained via FileMaker Pro. Developers are only permitted to see the items each develops. Standard setting is equally secure in that the committee members take the examination, as candidates do, then rate the items using a secure access port with password protection or in an in-person meeting where all examination materials are numbered and each is signed out by the participant and does not leave the room.

Candidates taking the examination must present legal photo identification and an examination code provided when each completes registration. The examination may be administered either via computer port with password protection or via paper and pencil testing. For the paper and pencil testing, each examination hardcopy is numbered. The candidate signs for that examination copy and takes the exam. Upon completion of the exam, the proctor receives the exam from the candidate and signs the examination copy back into the locked container. The ED or his/her representative then rechecks that all the examination hard copies, numbers and signatures are present. Once this tally has been successfully completed, the hardcopy examinations are shredded. The only exception is in the case of special accommodation under the ADA where a candidate can mark the examination itself instead of a Scantron form. Once that form has been transcribed then checked by a second transcriber, the form is sealed and maintained in a locked container until scores have been determined. A third transcriber may check the transcription if the candidate fails the examination. The candidate may NOT see the transcription or the examination once it has been handed to the proctor and the signatures received.

Examination materials and confidential candidate/Fellow materials are maintained in a double locked physical environment and a double secured electronic environment. The electronic environment is that of initial password protection and data encryption. Under no circumstance is any confidential data transmitted via unsecured email. Only secure transfer is permitted. These methods are covered in the Procedure Manual.

### **Panel Composition:**

The IBFN uses Panels of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in all aspects of examination development and standard setting. Each panel represents the relevant characteristics of the population to be certified per the program definitions. The panels represent the professionals applying for certification, the geographic, language and gender representation of the candidates. The panel also represents different levels/years of experience. The entire body of certificants is used to recruit SMEs. No individual or specific group of individuals is used disproportionately. The recruitment process is documented and includes the qualifications of all panel members. A training manual and training session includes the responsibilities entrusted to the panelists. The documentation includes the decisions and recommendations of panelists. At a minimum, panels are selected for the Job Task Analysis survey development, item development and standard setting. If a performance examination is determined necessary by the JTA for a specific program, a performance examiner panel is convened. To assure no undue or disproportionate influence of any individual or group, no panelist may serve on a given panel more than one time in a five (5) year cycle. However, the individuals on the standard setting panel may serve the next year on the item development panel as the insight they gained at standard setting can be highly beneficial in the revision of selected non-performing items and the items that are replaced as a part of the life cycle of the examination. As the certificant body enlarges, the time between serving on a panel will also increase incrementally. The panel size is generally four (4) to seven (7) panelists for the Job Task Analysis survey documents, seven (7) to thirteen (13) for the item writing panels, and seven (7) for the standard setting panels.

All panel participation lists with characteristics are included with the minutes for each panel meeting. These meetings may be in person (preferred) or virtual via secure webinar or meeting. The database format documenting panel participation is included in the Procedure Manual.

### **Job Task Analysis (JTA):**

The IBFN conducts a comprehensive JTA for each program every five (5) years and updates the information every two (2) years as indicated by the profession and changes in the science and performance of Functional Neurology and the specialties related by profession and by specialty topic. Each JTA defines and analyzes the domains or cognitive areas and the tasks related to the purpose of the credential. These domains and tasks relate to the knowledge, skills and abilities for each certificant. Each JTA summary is published on the IBFN website.

Each JTA includes a survey design panel of SMEs representing key professional characteristics. Course material from the prequalifying educational preparation courses, textbooks and journal articles are used to substantiate the survey categories and questions. Each item includes a Lykert scale for the frequency in which the domain or task is used and the importance of the domain or task.

A performance examination as well as a written examination may be developed if indicated by the JTA. The detailed document includes the weighting of each survey question, the decision rules determining the inclusion of the survey item in the examination, the JTA panel and their resumes, and the summary document including the general test blueprint. The comprehensive document includes the detailed blueprint from which the examination items and weighting are derived. The detailed blueprint is not public information.

Because the practice of Functional Neurology includes skills, a performance examination may be indicated. If indicated, the Summary and Detailed Job Task Analysis will include a test blueprint for the performance as well as the written examination.

The survey will be administered to as broad a practice area as possible. The annual meeting of the International Association of Functional Neurology and Rehabilitation (IAFNRR) will be used to administer the survey to all participants in the conference. If the response is insufficient, the survey will be posted on the IBFN website and invitations to complete the survey will be sent to all educational preparation programs.

A psychometric analysis of the JTA is performed. Validation of much of the information may be garnered via time and motion study/observation at active clinics with a variety of professional practitioners. All data will combine to make the final JTA. Demographic data regarding survey participants is included in the summary as well as the detailed documentation. The final report of each JTA includes the following:

- A. A description of the background and experience of subject-matter experts and professionals who participated in various phases of the job analysis;
- B. Identification of the psychometric consultants or organization used to conduct the job analysis or important phases of it;
- C. A description of methods used to delineate domains and tasks and associated knowledge and/or skills if included);
- D. A description of the survey sampling plan and rationale;
- E. Documentation of survey results, including return rate, analysis of ratings data, algorithms, or other psychometric methods used to analyze or combine ratings data, and rationale supporting representativeness of survey findings;
- F. A copy of the job task survey(s); and
- G. Date range or year of the study.



## Examination Specifications:

The IBFN examinations are designed to measure cognitive knowledge in the field of functional neurology. Each successful candidate will demonstrate the psychomotor skills necessary in the examination and treatment of patients. This is post-licensure specialization, generally at the post-doctoral level. This is an advanced level of practice for the Fellows in the specialty of Functional Neurology. Other programs certified through the IBFN are specialties within the general field of Functional Neurology. All examinations will be derived from associated JTAs and will include, as a minimum, a written multiple choice examination. Most will include a performance examination designed to measure the psychomotor skills, observational skills and communication skills necessary in the diagnosis and treatment of patients.

Multiple choice examinations are case driven and have a minimum of four (4) choices and a maximum of five (5) choices with one correct answer and the remainder distractors. As such, these case driven tests are analyzed via the Rasch testlet (is this a real word?) model to account for the lack of independence between items. A comprehensive item analysis and decision consistency psychometrics are performed. The passing standard is determined using a modified Angoff method, a Bookmark method or other psychometrically approved criterion based method along with statistical validation methods of determining item difficulty and candidate ability.

The performance examinations are video-taped and rated by two trained judges. When discrepancies occur between judges, a third judge scores the video-taped performance. Grading rubrics are developed with all judges trained in these rubrics. For clinical simulation examinations that are designed to determine if candidates know what they are seeing or hearing, videos are rated by a panel of judges. The panel rating of the video simulations is used to score the candidates' responses.

Psychometric equating methods are used for different forms of the written examination, and the standard setting panel rates each form of the performance examination separately. Psychometric analysis is performed to determine the difficulty of each form. Item analysis is performed on the examination candidate subsets. For example, item analysis is performed for M.D.s and a separate one for D.C.s, etc. In this way, for the general competency examination, the data is used to indicate the appropriate level of competency per license type. The standard setting panel consists of representatives from each of the major licensure types (MD, DO, DC, ND, DNP, DPT, Ph.D.). As enough professionals in any licensure type become certified in the general competency Fellow, subgroup examinations provide appropriate scope of practice limitations and skill levels. These subgroup examinations standard setting panels consist of only that licensure type. As changes occur in the profession(s), changes are made in the Job Task Analysis and, subsequently, in the examination(s). Each examination is documented with a specific Examination Specification Document. Those documents include:

1. Objective of the Examination
2. Description of the target audience for the examination
3. Description of the construct(s) and item types to be used
4. The weighted content outline (blueprint)
5. Expectations for the assembly of the examination
6. Examination administration requirements
7. The plan for scoring and equating the examination
8. The plan for conducting the psychometric analysis
9. Examination length

10. Administration time
11. The number and/or proportion of scored and non-scored (pre-test) items
12. The number and/or proportion of new and used items

**Examination Development:**

The IBFN develops and assembles all program examinations per the Specifications Document for that examination and in a manner to ensure that the content is accurate, current and appropriate for candidates, regardless of format and candidate demographics. Each item is referenced to the JTA and to appropriate scientific and clinical literature available to candidates in a reference list provided in the Candidate Handbook. The primary type of written examination is multiple choice; however, other written formats for specific portions such as the writing of a case report may be included if indicated by the JTA. If so, a panel of experienced and trained judges develop a grading rubric. This rubric is used to score the essays by the panel. Such rubrics may be included in the Candidate Handbook. The initial competency examination will only have one form until a sufficient databank of items has been developed. All items will correspond to the detailed weighted blueprint from the detailed JTA. Initially, no translations of forms will occur. All candidates will take the examinations in English as the coursework is provided initially in English. However, APA standards will be used for candidates requesting English as a Second Language (ESL) accommodation and additional time will be provided. Psychometric item analysis provides insight as to how items function within linguistic subgroups. This data is used to assure fairness across all demographics. If nomenclature used to classify items changes, the items are reclassified.

The following steps are involved in the development of IFNB examinations:

1. Training of SMEs in all panels;
2. Developing items;
3. Documenting the accuracy, currency, and relevance of examination items and scoring rubrics and their congruence with the purpose of the examination;
4. Using empirical item performance data to inform decisions related to the evaluation, revision, and use of items;
5. Assembling new forms of the examination by selecting appropriate items, revising selected items when appropriate, evaluating and refining scoring rubrics for subjectively scored examinations, and adhering to examination specifications;
6. Structuring, delivering, and documenting training provided to item writers, item reviewers, and others who produce examination content in a professional and consistent manner; and
7. Documenting the development and assembly process for forms of an examination.

**Standard Setting:**

The IBFN performs and documents a standard setting study for each program examination. The standard setting study relates performance on the examination to proficiency, so that the program can set a passing score appropriate for certification. The procedures used to establish performance standards is based on generally accepted measurement principles consistent with the purpose of the examination and item format(s) used. The standard setting studies are documented in sufficient detail to allow for replication, including descriptions of the procedures followed, results and appropriate interpretations. The report is confidential, but the IBFN may make a general description of the methods used in the

standard-setting studies publicly available. The IBFN evaluates the standards of proficiency annually for each program examination.

The methods that the IBFN uses for standard setting include a review of content and empirical data from the psychometric analysis of the examination completed by candidates. The facilitator for the standard-setting study(s) uses item-level and test-level statistics to monitor the judgment of participants. Participants are provided with these statistics after they take the examination. Item difficulty values are provided to the SME judges during the standard setting process. Demographic data about candidates is provided in order to clarify how the sample represents borderline candidates. Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the IBFN, this information is critical in examining the impact on the passing rate for each discipline scored.

The SME judges represent each of the disciplines for that program and are trained in the purpose of the assessment, the conceptual description of the standard of proficiency, eligibility criteria, and how to apply standard-setting process(es). Judges also receive training in the interpretation of any statistics that are needed to have a sound basis for making required judgments. Judges are informed that they will be making standard-setting recommendations to the governing body or other policymakers who have the authority to establish the standard.

Anytime the conceptual description of the standard of proficiency is changed, the performance standard is re-evaluated. The IBFN examines and revises the performance standard whenever significant content of specification changes occur for an examination. Standard setting studies are performed after each examination as the content changes on the average of twenty percent (20%) per year.

The Standard-setting report includes the following:

1. The rationale for selecting the method used;
2. The rationale for the number of panelists, the manner of selecting the panelists, and panelist qualifications;
3. Qualifications of the psychometric staff or consultant designing and implementing the process;
4. Procedures and/or materials used;
5. A conceptual description of the level of proficiency required for certification;
6. Descriptions or conceptualizations developed by the panelists;
7. Data-collection activities and procedures;
8. Analysis of the results of the standard-setting study;
9. Standard-setting recommendations as developed by the panel;
10. Any adjustments made to the standard-setting recommendations by the Board of Directors;
11. The effective date of the standard;
12. The resulting pass rate(s), and the pass rate for each of the multiple hurdles (performance, essay, multiple-choice, etc.)

### **Examination Administration:**

The IBFN programs adhere to policies and procedures for each examination administration. The initial examination for general competency is expected to be administered during the week prior to or during the IAFNR conference. The first administration is expected to be a small group of under one hundred

(100) candidates. The examination is expected to take two days, one-half day for the written examination and one and one-half days for the performance and simulation examinations. The examination security is paramount and only those authorized to handle the materials are permitted access. All documents are numbered and signed for and returned with signature. All candidate scoring materials for performance and simulations are in sealed envelopes with a signature across the seal. The completed, scored documents are resealed in a second envelope, and the rater signs across the seal. The ED or his/her representative stores, conveys, administers and disposes of all examination materials. The Candidate Handbook delineates the examinee behavior before, during and after examination administration. Any violation of this required behavior can result in a charge of cheating and an automatic failing grade with the potential of not being allowed to sit for the examination for a given period to be adjudicated by the ethics committee. The confidentiality policies, conflict of interest policies, test security policies, incident review processes and disciplinary procedures are posted on the IBFN website. All candidates sign a document prior to taking the examination that they have read and understand the policies and procedures.

Examinations are administered using standardized procedures specified by the IBFN program and delineated in the specifications documents. The purpose of this standardized procedure is to assure that all candidates are tested under comparable conditions and to promote the validity of scores. The IBFN documents and follows standardized examination administration procedures, including verification of candidate identity using a legal photo identification document for every examination or examination sub-component (written examination, performance examination, or other examination section). The examination administration personnel and registration personnel are trained per the materials in the Administration and Registration Manual. All procedures are clearly defined in this manual. Proctors are screened for conflict of interest or ability to influence examination results. All selected proctors receive training including registration, ADA or ESL accommodations, management and reporting of irregularities, and chain of command in dealing with irregularities. Each proctor must confirm reading and agree to abide by the procedures outlined in the examination administration manual. For performance examinations, proctors must be provided with specifications for site layout, required tools and equipment to ensure standardized administration.

Ongoing monitoring of compliance is conducted in each examination via a monitor designated to check each proctor for his/her performance. This type of monitoring is also provided across raters in any subjective type tests. Any discrepancies are discussed with the group of proctors or raters with corrections implemented immediately. Logs of equipment usage are maintained. At least one extra set of performance examination equipment is provided in case of equipment failure. This includes video-taping equipment. If the written examination is given using computer technology, equipment redundancy is required at a ten percent (10%) level. After each examination, the IBFN solicits evaluations regarding the examination process. The evaluations must be returned prior to score announcement for unbiased feedback. The security measures for all personnel, including candidates, is critical to maintaining the integrity of the examination. Administration sites, if more than one, offer similar conditions, such as adequate lighting, comfortable seating and a quiet environment free from distractions to ensure that candidates have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities. Working space must be sufficient and spacing between examinees or workstation divider requirements are defined to minimize cheating opportunities. Candidates are not allowed any electronic devices of any type.

### **Scoring and Score Reporting:**

The IBFN employs and documents sound psychometric procedures for scoring, interpreting, and reporting examination results. Given that the IBFN utilizes cases for the multiple-choice examinations, psychometricians utilize the Rausch testlet method for analysis. For the performance examinations, inter-rater reliability is used along with psychometric analysis of raters to determine if one or more raters fall in an outlier position with respect to their overall performance and across forms of the performance examination. Quality-control procedures for monitoring the accuracy of calculations used to produce scores and the conversion of raw scores to standardized, equated, or scaled scores includes two Ph.Ds. examining all data. All weighted items, as defined by the JTA, are included in the quality-control review.

The methods for developing scoring rubrics for performance, simulation and essay examination items are documented. The training of all raters/judges in the use of the rubrics is documented. The documents used to support the consistency in scoring judgment includes the following:

1. Criteria for selecting judges;
2. Description of the materials and methods for training judges;
3. Evidence demonstrating that the primary source of variation in candidate scores comes from candidate performance, not rater error;
4. Summaries and results of process, rater, or scoring audits or other technical controls to ensure that the candidates' performances are the primary determinant of whether they pass or fail examinations.

All scoring, interpreting and reporting of examination results is documented after each administration of each examination and maintained over a seven-year period.

Each candidate is provided with his/her overall performance on each examination. Passing candidates are provided with areas of weakness and continuing education in those areas are recommended. Severe deficiencies require specific continuing education.

Candidates who fail are provided with areas of competence and deficiency in both domains and tasks. If one or more areas are severely deficient, the candidate will be required to remediate in those areas prior to retaking the examination.

### **Reliability:**

The IBFN utilizes reliability psychometrical analysis such that the decisions made from the examinations are as intended. Estimates of score reliability, decision consistency and standard errors of the measurement are calculated using methods appropriate for the characteristics of each examination. All reliability calculations are documented in the annual report and in the technical report. Each examination containing multiple levels or sections of examinations include reliability of each sub-score, and the statistics used to calculate the reliability and the decision consistency. All statistical information is included in the technical report. A Ph.D. psychometrician is contracted to assure all statistical analysis is appropriate for the examination type.

### **Examination Score Equating:**

The IBFN demonstrates that different forms of an examination in any of the programs does not

advantage or disadvantage candidates because of differences in the content framework and/or difficulty of the particular form. Each active form aligns to the currently applicable content specifications consistent with the requirements of the equating model. A consultant Ph.D. utilizes statistical equating procedures in accepted psychometric practices. Further, the IFNB certification programs demonstrate that results obtained from adapted and source versions are comparable across demographic and language groups. For examinations that are subjectively scored, the IBFN demonstrates that results are equivalent across raters and assessment tasks. The psychometrician statistically calculates difficulty values for each item and analyzes the results for each rater across all assessment tasks. The IBFN monitors form equivalence with each administration of any examination from any of its programs. The documentation of equating procedures includes the following:

1. The examination or examinations being equated;
2. The rationale for the design and method of equating;
3. The equating data collection design (e.g., common items, common people, random groups);
4. The statistical model used to accomplish the equating (e.g., Rasch, other item response theory, and classical models); and
5. The number of items and the number of examinees used in the equating procedure.

### **Maintaining Certification:**

Relative to the rate of scientific discovery in neuroscience and functional neurology, recertification in terms of continuing education in functional neurology or related neurology coursework at the post licensure graduate level consisting of forty-five (45) hours annually through Department of Education accredited colleges or universities post licensure departments is required on an annual basis. Additionally, for the protection of the public, recertification testing is required every five (5) years to validate knowledge, skills and abilities. Participation in formal research projects that have Institutional Review Board approval and are in the field of functional neurology may qualify for continuing education credits. Peer reviewed publications, not self-published articles or books, in functional neurology may qualify for continuing education credits. Participation in JTA, item writing and standard setting SME panels may qualify for a portion of the continuing education requirement on a periodic basis.

### **Quality Assurance:**

The IBFN maintains an active quality-assurance program that provides consistent application and periodic review of policies and procedures. A variety of staff training manuals, webinars and in person training occurs prior to various examination components such as application processing, registration, examination preparation and publication, scoring and financial management. These training sessions have, at their conclusion, an evaluation component and a further review component after each examination has been administered. When an error in a program is identified either through an issue at an examination or through candidate or staff feedback, immediate analysis and remediation of the problem is accomplished with the ED leading the quality improvement endeavor. The policies and procedures of the IBFN are reviewed annually. Further, the examinations and the results obtained from their use, including

the management and correction of examination-related errors, are reviewed at least annually and upon any incident of error.

The IBFN documents all orientation and training of board members, staff, SMEs and examination raters/judges. All committees and individuals undergoing training submit an evaluation of the effectiveness of that training and suggestions for improvement. The evaluation is conducted after the examination so deficits in the training may be identified. The psychometric consultant also monitors the examination over time and recommends any strategy changes in accord with the number and/or qualifications of candidates, the nature of the examination and the types of decisions the examination supports. Specific quality indicators are identified by the examination committee. Evaluation information includes item analysis, reliability, decision consistency, speededness-appropriateness of timed testing limitations and candidate feedback. All quality activities are recorded in minutes, calendars schedules and training logs.

### **Maintaining Accreditation:**

The IBFN will seek accreditation through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and the International Standards Organization (ISO) 27014. Once the accreditation has been achieved, IBFN will adhere to all the standards and complete all annual reports and program material and related changes.