

Humantech's Position

Board Certification in Ergonomics



Introduction

Ergonomics professionals use a variety of titles to describe their qualifications, credentials, and certifications. Currently, a wide range of “ergonomics certifications” are available from associations and boards to for-profit companies and consultants. The validity and comprehensiveness of these certifications vary widely; the mix of titles and certifications has caused some confusion about what constitutes a qualified professional in ergonomics. This statement provides background about our position on professional certification in this practice.

Our position is that board certifications in ergonomics, meeting criteria set by the International Ergonomics Association (IEA), designate the highest level and most qualified ergonomics professionals. Professional certifications in ergonomics endorsed by the IEA include:

- Certified Professional Ergonomist (CPE), United States
- Canadian Certified Professional Ergonomist (CCPE), Canada
- European Ergonomist (Eur.Erg), Europe
- Certified Professional Ergonomist (CPE), Australia
- Certified NZ Ergonomist (CNZErg), New Zealand

Competency for a Professional Ergonomist

The IEA is recognized as the leader in establishing minimum standards for certification in the practice of ergonomics. It defines a professional ergonomist as “an individual whose knowledge and skills concern the analysis of human/system interaction and the design of the system in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.” In addition, “an IEA-recognized Certified Ergonomist is a professional ergonomist whose practice and training have met the quality criteria set by an IEA-endorsed certifying body.”

Within the IEA, the Professional Standards and Education Standing Committee has reviewed and established mutual recognition of the certification bodies listed above. Each of these bodies has established consistent descriptions of the core competencies and characteristics of a professional ergonomist. The Foundation for Professional Ergonomics (2007) defines the six characteristics of an “ergonomics professional” as follows:

- Has mastered a complex body of knowledge and skills (human factors and ergonomics) used in the service of others, and maintains competence in that body of knowledge and set of skills.
- Demonstrates accountability to the public-at-large and to the profession, and maintains performance measures established by the profession (meaningful continuing learning, minimum standards of competence and ethics).
- Governed by a code of ethics.
- Expresses and demonstrates commitment to competence, and maintains the integrity of the moral and collegial nature of the ergonomics profession; an ergonomics professional is accountable for his or her conduct, exhibits altruism, and promotes activities in the public good within his or her domain.
- Demonstrates autonomy in practice and judgment and accepts the responsibility of self-regulation.
- Exhibits professional spirit, which results from associating with people that adhere to a common ideal that puts service above gain, excellence above quantity, self-expression above pecuniary motives, and loyalty above individual advantage (professionals contribute to the advancement of the professional group).



Board Certification

Board certification is the process by which professionals (physicians, teachers, dentists, safety professionals, ergonomists, etc.) demonstrate their mastery of core knowledge, expertise, and skills via a rigorous process of testing and peer evaluation.

Certification by a member board is administered by specialists in the specific area (in this case ergonomics) and based on required core competencies established by the board. Candidates for board certification must meet minimum requirements for core competencies, education, work experience, and in some cases, work samples, to qualify for testing. Testing can be provided through written, verbal, and/or simulated demonstration means. After certification, ongoing professional development and practice are required to maintain the certification.

Certificate versus Certification

Several for-profit organizations offer training programs that result in a certificate in ergonomics, which is different from certification. The Institute for Credentialing Excellence distinguishes the difference as follows:

“Professional or personnel certification is a voluntary process by which individuals are evaluated against predetermined standards for knowledge, skills, or competencies. Participants who demonstrate that they meet the standards by successfully completing the assessment process are granted a time-limited credential. To retain the credential, participants must maintain continued competence. The credential awarded by the certification program provider denotes that the participant possesses particular knowledge, skills, or competencies.”

The ergonomics certifications listed above, in our view, are professional certifications. In contrast:

“Certificates of attendance or participation are provided to individuals (participants) who have attended or participated in classes, courses, or other education/training programs or events. The certificate awarded at the completion of the program or event signifies that the participant was present and in some cases that the participant actively participated in the program or event. Demonstration of accomplishment of the intended learning outcomes by participants is NOT a requirement for receiving the certificate; thus, possession of a certificate of attendance or participation does not indicate that the intended learning outcomes have been accomplished by the participant.”

Therefore, possession of a certificate of completion of training is not the same as board certification in ergonomics.

Conclusion

Board certification in ergonomics, set by the IEA, is the highest level of certification in ergonomics and ensures the highest quality professional. There are only a few recognized and valid certifications available for professional ergonomists today. These are the five certifying bodies listed previously. Other forms of certifications, which may provide their own value, are not equivalent to board certification.

Endorsement

This position statement was accepted by Senior Leadership on April 30, 2017.

References

- Board of Certification in Professional Ergonomics. 2016. www.bcpe.org
- Canadian College for the Certification of Professional Ergonomists. 2016. <https://www.cccpe.ca/>
- Foundation for Professional Ergonomics. 2006. What does it mean to be a “professional” and what does it mean to be an ergonomics professional? Retrieved on 12/14/2016 from www.ergofoundation.org/resources
- Human Factors & Ergonomics Society of Australia, Inc. 2016. <http://www.ergonomics.org.au/membership/cpe>
- Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of New Zealand. 2016. <http://www.ergonomics.org.nz/>
- International Ergonomics Association. 2016. <http://www.iea.cc/project/index.html>
- International Ergonomics Association. 2012. Final report of the IEA Future Ergonomics Committee, January 22, 2012. A strategy for Human Factors/Ergonomics: Developing the discipline and profession. *Ergonomics*. 2012;55(4):377-95.
- Institute for Credentialing Excellence. 2010. Defining Features of Quality Certification and Assessment-Based Certificate Programs. Retrieved on 1/18/2017 from <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=4>

