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IT CERTIFICATION COUNCIL

**DE&I MATURITY MODEL
FOR CERTIFICATION
PROGRAMS**

AN IT CERTIFICATION RESOURCE

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DE&I Maturity Model for Certification Programs

Why DE&I for Certification?

Equity and inclusivity are intrinsically linked to diversity when it comes to certification, and **diversity is critical to sustaining the value and growth of certification.**

- The population of certification holders is often not representative of population diversity.
- **Equitable and inclusive pathways to certification is necessary for increasing certification holder diversity** across gender, race, sexual orientation, accessibility needs, and other human characteristics.
- Programs seeking **to grow within existing and new markets** need to support an increasingly diverse population of candidates.

Using the DE&I Maturity Model



The maturity levels and categorical definitions in the model, along with the companion guide of DE&I definitions, diversity dimensions, and certification program aspects, can be used to:

1. Identify which level of maturity best describes the current state of your organization in its DE&I journey;
2. Determine the focus and goals for DE&I efforts that will help advance your organization to the next DE&I maturity level or evolve your current level of maturity;
3. Define the metrics to use in measuring progress toward those goals;
4. Develop a DE&I action plan to reach those goals;
5. Evaluate your DE&I maturity level and monitor your action plan progress to continuously update your goals.

DE&I Definitions

Diversity	Representation of the world's differences and similarities. Diversity dimensions include demographic and other personal characteristics of humans, for example age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, color, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, as well as characteristics related to socio-economic context.
Equity	Fair, bias-free experience and access, as well as the recognition that in certain circumstances different treatment may be required to achieve it. While equality strives for sameness in the allocation of resources and opportunities, equity considers how differences in circumstances may necessitate a different allocation of resources and opportunities.
Inclusion	Promotion of a sense of empowerment and well-being among all constituents regardless of dimensions of human difference. Inclusion can involve the practice of including all stakeholders in organizational contexts, as well as offering opportunities to people on the basis of their knowledge, skills and abilities, and providing access to resources that enable their participation.
Bias	Bias is an inclination, tendency, opinion, or prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences. Bias can be conscious (also known as explicit bias) or unconscious (also known as implicit bias).
Intersectionality	The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

Definitions adapted from:

- Accenture: <https://www.accenture.com/cz-en/insights/software-platforms/measuring-inclusion-diversity-equity-goals>
- UCSF: <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/programs-resources/training/unconscious-bias-training>
- ISO 30415: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:30415:ed-1:v1:en>
- George Washington University: <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>

Dimensions of Difference in Human Experience

Different dimensions will be applicable to different certification programs. This list provides a suggested starting point. It might be appropriate to add dimensions relevant to a specific program or remove those that don't apply to a program.

Dimension of Difference	Type
Level of Test Anxiety/Confidence	Assessment Specific
Physical Ability/Disability (including auditory, speech and visual characteristics)	Core Demographics
Cognition/Neurodiversity	Core Demographics
Gender Orientation	Core Demographics
Race/Ethnicity	Core Demographics
Sexual Orientation	Core Demographics
Age	Core Demographics
Religion/Spiritual Beliefs	Core Demographics
Nationality/National Origin	Core Demographics
Culture	Supplemental Demographics
Language	Supplemental Demographics
Regional Location	Supplemental Demographics
Income/Class/Status	Supplemental Demographics

Adapted from Loden's diversity wheel:

[http://www.loden.com/Web_Stuff/Articles - Videos - Survey/Entries/2010/9/3 Global Diversity Puts New Spin on Lodens Diversity Wheel.html](http://www.loden.com/Web_Stuff/Articles_-_Videos_-_Survey/Entries/2010/9/3_Global_Diversity_Puts_New_Spin_on_Lodens_Diversity_Wheel.html)

Certification Program Aspects for DE&I

Goal: Apply the DE&I maturity model across each of these aspects. DE&I needs to cover the entire end-to-end candidate experience including any additional steps or aspects not covered below. Consideration should be given to the impact of DE&I gaps on level of test confidence.

Aspect	Primary DEI Category
Program reach and access for underrepresented populations	Diversity
Exam and other program content	Equity
Approaches to how candidates demonstrate skill and knowledge	Equity
Learning experience	Equity
Exam preparation and practice options	Equity
Post-certification support options	Equity
Equipment/technology requirements and support	Equity
Accommodations and reasonable adjustments options/experience	Equity
Candidate registration experience	Inclusivity
Exam delivery experience	Inclusivity

4 Levels of DE&I Maturity

The DE&I Maturity Model for Certification Programs is comprised of four levels (basic, emerging, progressing, and integrated/optimized) defined across six areas of consideration (definition, scope, approach, level of commitment for DE&I, as well as certification team and certification holder diversity).

	1 - Basic	2 - Emerging	3 - Progressing	4 - Integrated (or Optimized)
Definition of DE&I	Organization has not established a working definition of diversity, equity, or inclusion or such definition is limited to compliance/legal requirements.	Organization has established a working definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion beyond legal/compliance requirements and includes some additional demographics.	Organization has established a working definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion considering most dimensions of difference.	In addition to level 3 characteristics, the organization has a working definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion considering multi-dimensionality, intersectionality, and inclusivity.
Scope of DE&I	DE&I efforts are focused mostly on diversifying the candidate population and/or supporting multiple language options. Diversity is defined across 1 or 2 dimensions of difference (typically core demographics, such as race, nationality, and/or gender). Improvement efforts are limited to 1-2 certification program aspects.	The focus on DE&I is expanded to consider additional dimensions of difference (including both core and supplemental demographics). Improvement efforts are expanded to consider more certification program aspects.	The focus on DE&I considers all dimensions of difference, including multi-dimensionality and intersectionality (or the effects of discrimination based on multiple intersecting dimensions of difference). Improvement efforts consider the experience across all certification program aspects.	The focus on DE&I considers all dimensions of difference, including multi-dimensionality and intersectionality. Improvement efforts consider the experience across all certification program aspects. Innovative approaches to DE&I across the entire program experience are regularly explored.

	1 - Basic	2 - Emerging	3 - Progressing	4 - Integrated (or Optimized)
Approach to DE&I	An evaluation of DE&I gaps has not been completed. Any actions to improve DE&I are largely reactive. There is little or no DE&I measurement taking place.	A DE&I evaluation has been completed to identify program gaps and improvement targets. Some actions to address gaps are proactive. Inclusive design practices are occasionally used for creating and improving end-to-end program experience. Some metrics have been identified to measure DE&I improvement.	A DE&I evaluation has been completed to identify program gaps and improvement targets, with identified gaps being systematically addressed and tracked. Inclusive design practices are the default for creating and improving end-to-end program experience. Quantitative and qualitative metrics have been identified and are used to measure DE&I improvement.	A DE&I evaluation is conducted on an annual basis to continuously identify program gaps and refine improvement targets. Inclusive design practices have been established and verified for creating and improving end-to-end program experience. Quantitative and qualitative metrics are routinely used to measure DE&I improvement. Some progress has been made in systematically addressing gaps.
Commitment to DE&I	While the organization might invest in improving certain DE&I dimensions and is aware of its general importance, DE&I is not yet defined as a strategic opportunity.	DE&I is defined as a strategic priority for program improvement with an approved DE&I mission/purpose document.	DE&I is treated as a strategic priority for program growth and improvement, with a formal DE&I plan approved by organization management within the last 12 months. This plan contains clear goals and metrics for evaluating progress and is actively guiding action in a measurable way.	In addition to level 3 characteristics, the approved plan has had at least one annual cycle of review and improvement, and action plans have been implemented and/or updated as a result.

	1 - Basic	2 - Emerging	3 - Progressing	4 - Integrated (or Optimized)
Diversity of Certification Team	Little progress has been made in ensuring that the diversity of authors, reviewers, and other members of the certification team reflects the diversity of the organization's target candidate population.	Steps have been identified and taken to ensure that the diversity of authors, reviewers, and other members of the certification team reflects the diversity of the organization's target candidate population.	The certification team's diversity has been evaluated, is improving and approaching the diversity of the target candidate population. However, no ongoing process to evaluate and improve diversity and inclusion exists.	A process is in place for regularly evaluating and adjusting the inclusivity and representative diversity of the certification team. To the extent possible given the size of the certification team, it is as diverse as the target candidate population.
Diversity of Certification Holders	The program does not know the diversity characteristics of its certification holders but may be starting to determine how to reasonably estimate diversity of its certification holders based on existing data such as location and language preference.	The program has made a reasonable estimation of the diversity characteristics of its certification holders based on its working definition of diversity and is working to proactively collect diversity information from its certification holders.	The program actively collects diversity information from candidates across some dimensions of difference. The program has used this data (when provided by certification holders) to target areas for improved program diversity.	The program actively collects diversity information from candidates across many dimensions of difference. The program has processes in place to ensure it actively uses this data (when provided by certification holders) to target areas for continuous program diversity improvement.

Human Difference and Certification Program Dimensions: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wcH7T_rdZa0gyyNRmTpYDIyHnEVyg1SO4Sg6kAzIIFI/edit

Inclusivity Model Research: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WasKgd3EDSWEZwiUehXCAQBxGUf0owWY/edit#gid=1783665345>

To bring this to life, here are some examples of how an organization may progress from basic to emerging and from emerging to progressing levels of the maturity model. These steps are examples only and are not prescriptive. Every certification program is different, and it's important to align your DE&I progress with steps that make sense for your organization.

Moving from Basic to Emerging Level of Maturity: Example Steps

1. Based on publicly available demographic data for the countries currently targeted for your program and/or your organizational priorities for diversity, define at least three diversity characteristics that reflect marginalized populations in those countries.
2. Define a plan for benchmarking/measuring those characteristics of your certification holders.
3. Define equity and inclusivity goals and proxy measures for your program based on those diversity characteristics and at least three certification program aspects (e.g., increase and measure registration success, delivery success, and access to prep options for certification holders with and without those diversity characteristics).
4. Define a plan for data collection in support of benchmarks/measurement of diversity characteristics and equity/inclusivity goals for both candidates/certification holders and certification team (e.g., survey certification holders; survey potential candidates; survey individuals involved in exam and certification program design to gather diversity information). It's often useful to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.
5. Implement your data collection plan and analyze data to determine DE&I gaps and improvement targets, including evaluating the diversity of your certification development team, SMEs, etc.
6. Use audit findings as inspiration for developing a mission and purpose statement and for defining an approach to address gaps and meet targets (e.g., brainstorm/plan improvement options using inclusive design practices).
7. Determine how to expand DE&I mission, focus, and approach to include both core and supplemental demographics and additional program aspects.

Moving from Emerging to Progressing Level of Maturity: Example Steps

1. Define an expanded set of diversity characteristics that reflect most dimensions of difference as well as marginalized populations within your program's overall target population.
2. Define expanded equity and inclusivity goals and proxy measures for your program based on those diversity characteristics and additional certification program aspects (e.g., in addition to existing metrics, increase and measure post-certification options for certification holders, and equipment/technology access for candidates, with and without those diversity characteristics).
3. Refine plan for data collection in support of benchmarks/measurement of expanded diversity characteristics and equity/inclusivity goals for both candidates/certification holders and certification team, including impacts of intersectionality and multi-dimensionality (e.g., conduct ongoing surveys of certification holders; survey potential candidates; survey individuals involved in exam and certification program design to gather diversity and inclusion information).
4. Implement your refined data collection plan and analyze data to determine DE&I gaps and improvement targets including continuous monitoring of diversity of certification team. Begin to evaluate the impacts of multi-dimensionality and intersectionality on equity and inclusivity of the learning and assessment experiences offered by your program.
5. Use audit findings to refine mission and purpose statements and approach to address gaps and update targets systematically (e.g., brainstorm/plan improvement options using inclusive design practices).
6. Develop a DE&I action plan that will be refined and approved annually based on results of your ongoing data collection. Update goals, metrics, etc. based on current progress and opportunities for improvement.

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