

The National Council  
**Certification Scanner**

Newsletter of the  
**National Council for Skill Standards in Graphic Communications**

For Industry Managers, Trainers & Educators Interested in  
National Voluntary Skill Standards & Certification Issues for the Graphic Communications Industry

Volume I Number 2

July-August 1999

Kennebunk, Maine

**Certification Examinations Scheduled  
for Flexo & Litho Press Operators**

Multi-color certification examinations for flexo and litho press operators are scheduled twice annually, conducted by proctors contracted by the National Council (NC) at vocational schools and participating industry associations and affiliates convenient to candidates. Following is the examination schedule through November 2000:

**Flexo Press Operator's**

**Multi-Color Certification Examinations**

- August 26, 1999 / Apply by July 30
- February 24, 2000 / Apply by January 28
- August 24, 2000 / Apply by July 31

**Litho Press Operator's**

**Multi-Color Certification Examinations**

- November 11, 1999 / Apply by October 15
- April 27, 2000 / Apply by March 31
- November 9, 2000 / Apply by October 16

NC *Flexo* and *Litho Press Skill Standards* publications serve as study guides for candidates taking the exams. The publications are available from these sources:

- For **Flexo Press Skill Standards**  
(Pre-Publication copy through August 1999) contact:  
Foundation of Flexographic Technical Association  
Marconi Avenue - Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-7212  
Voice: 516-737-6026 - Fax: 516-737-6813  
Website: www.fta-ffa.org  
*Flexo Press Skill Standards*: \$10/ea +S&H
- For **Litho Press Skill Standards** contact:  
Graphic Arts Technical Foundation  
Deer Run Road - Sewickley, PA 15143-2600  
Voice: 800/662-3916 - Fax: 412/741-2311  
Email: gatforders@abdintl.com  
*Offset Press Skill Standards*: \$20/ea +S&H

*Examination Registration Kits* are available at no charge by contacting the NC by phone, fax, or e-mail. Registration is \$150 per person. Upon receiving the applicant's registration and confirming eligibility, the candidate will receive the *Guide to Credentialing* containing examination topics, how to prepare for the examination, and sample test questions. Successful candidates will be certified for a five-year period. Brochures available on request.

**Flexographic Press Skill Standards,  
Operator Eligibility and  
Preparation for Certification**

Skill Standards, in the form of a listing of competency statements that define job functions, form the basis for the design and development of all NC certification examinations. The standards are developed by conducting a job analysis of skill operations, and serve as the primary study guide for certification examinations. The *Flexo Press Operator's Multi-Color Certification Examination* is a multiple-choice exam of approximately 200 questions in problem-solving and trouble-shooting format. The number of test items (questions) in the exam and the weight assigned to each item differs according to the criticality of a particular job function, depending upon essential knowledge, degree of impact and job applicability. For example: the expert-level knowledge and experience required of flexo press operators in producing high-quality process color, regardless of the product, are considered universal across industry. Test items on process color applications, color theory, trapping, inks and substrates are therefore weighted more heavily than items on converting process-specific production functions. The total percentage of test items in the examination covering specific converting processes is small. In the examination for flexo multi-color press operators, ten percent or less are converting-specific questions. Where, for example, test items are weighted on a 3:1 basis, e.g., a question on safety, quality, measurement skills or color is worth 1, a question related to an envelope or label for example would be worth 1/3. If a candidate has never produced a color label product and fails a question related to that product, the percent marked down will be far less than a question that relates to the handling and care of anilox rolls. An operator's lack of knowledge about a product with which he/she is unfamiliar will likely not result in failure of the examination. Even though the operator may work in one specific converting process, lack of familiarity of other converting processes is not a significant limiting factor to successful participation in the examination and subsequent certification.

All NC skill standards are written at the expert level of performance. To be eligible for the flexo examination an operator must have a minimum of five years of continuous experience on multi-color flexographic presses, with two-and-one-half years (included or in addition to) in a lead operating position. Additional preparation may also include added years of experience in process color press operating, a certificate from a vocational/technical school, attendance at FTA seminars, and on-the-job training. The most comprehensive resource for study in preparation for the examination is *Flexography: Principles & Practices*, a six-volume set of publications on flexographic technology. The fifth edition has been completely rewritten and expanded, reflecting the many

changes in flexography over the past decade. To purchase your copy and for more information contact the FTA. Special price discounts apply for orders placed before July 31. For information on the flexo multi-color certification examination, contact the NC; phone, fax, e-mail numbers and addresses above, front page of this newsletter.

### *Industry Participation in the Multi-Color Offset Press Operator's Certification Examination*

Since the first examination in November 1997, a total of 157 press operators from 51 organizations have successfully participated in the Offset Press Multi-Color Certification Examination, including 95 sheetfed and 62 web press operators. Successful participants receive certification as National Council Certified Operators (NCCO) for a five-year period from the date of their examination. The organizations with successful participants are as follows:

Admiral Products, Inc. / American Spirit Graphics / Anderberg Lund / American Graphic Arts Center / Anderson Lithograph / Appleton Papers, Inc. / Banta Direct Marketing / Bert-Co Graphics / Carpenter Reserve / Carter Printing Company / The Castle Press / Cohber Press / The ColAd Group / Complete Printing / Crescent Printing Co. / Digital Express / DeKalb Technical Institute / Flour City Packaging Corp. / Ft. James Corp. / General Litho Services / Gopher State Litho / Graphic Arts Technical Foundation / Great Western Litho / Greens, Inc. / Impact Plastics / Japs-Olson Co. / Liberty Check Printers / Litho Inc. / Mail-Well Label / Mead Products / Meyers Litho / Nahan Printing Co. / Neyensch Printers / Omni-trade Industrial Co., Ltd. / PPI, Inc. / Quebecor USA-St. Cloud / Rhodes Printing Group / The Saint Paul Companies, Inc. / Salt Lake Printing Center / Scott Lithographing / Scoville Press / Sinclair Printing / Solar Communications, Inc. / Union Hospital Printing Services / University of Minnesota Printing Services / Webcraft Technologies / West Group / Westpro Graphics / Williams Printing Co. / Woman's Hospital Printing Services / Worth Higgins & Associates.

The examination is based on the NC Offset Press Skill Standards, available from the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation. Please contact the NC for information on the Offset Press Operator's Multi-Color Certification Examination. Registration Kits are available at no charge.

### *Project to Revise Imaging Skill Standards & Produce Certification Examination*

---

The Certification Scanner is a bimonthly publication of the National Council for Skill Standards in Graphic Communications. Direct practical applications of the skill standards to the NC for review and possible publication. Publication does not infer NC endorsement. Please contact: William H. Smith, Managing Director, 408 Lafayette Center, Kennebunk, Maine 04043-1800. Voice: 207/985-9898. Fax: 207/985-6347. E-mail: nc-skl-stds@cybertours.com. Information in the Certification Scanner may be freely reproduced. Credit will be appreciated.

---

Technological advancements in electronic prepress will be addressed in revising the NC Imaging Skill Standards. Following revision and national validation, the Imaging Skill Standards will subsequently serve as the basis for the design and development of the NC Imaging Operator's Multi-Color Certification Examination. In August, Subject Matter Experts (SME) with technicians, research engineers, educators and trainers from the following organizations will be convened as a national Technical Working Group (TWG) to accomplish the two-part project:

Anderson Lithograph / Appalachian State University / Big Picture Magazine / Creo Products, Inc. / Fuji Photo Film, Inc. / Green Printing Co. / Heidelberg USA, Inc. / Imaging Systems, Inc. / International Prepress Assn. / Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute / Rochester Institute of Technology / R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co. / Solar Communications, Inc. / Valassis Communications, Inc.

SMEs will work in as many as five TWGs utilizing e-mail and telephone conferences to accomplish project tasks. Periodic TWG meetings will also be scheduled. Working under professional facilitation, TWGs will determine examination organization and content based upon current industry electronic prepress functions, and appropriately structure content to certify job skills that are integral to current electronic prepress functions as organized in the *Imaging Skill Standards: Job Engineering, Image Acquisition, Assembly, Output, and Technical Services*. An array of examination components will be designed that will allow a certification candidate to be examined in the major work areas in which he/she is considered expert, and over a period of time and as experience qualifies, apply for further testing to achieve certification in all areas of electronic prepress.

The examination will be multiple-choice format. Test questions will pose problems for resolution, and describe quality problems to test the candidate's troubleshooting skills. Eligibility requirements will include a minimum of five years of continuous experience in a major job function in addition to specified employment, attendance and safety requirements. The scope of certification testing will include the major work areas of production, including bindery and finishing requirements: those job/product requirements that must be included in prepress functions.

The NC has engaged Innovative Organizational Concepts, Inc., of Brooksville, Florida to facilitate the project. The *Imaging Skill Standards* were originally produced in 1995 by the National Printing Skill & Knowledge Standards Project under a matching grant from the U.S. Department of Education, awarded to the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation.