



National Center for Competency Testing

Medical Assistant National Standard Setting Study

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Scores on the National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA) are intended to be interpreted as a measure of candidate knowledge associated with the performance of job tasks required for entry level practice as a Medical Assistant. The intended use of NCMA test scores is to assure the public and employers that those who pass the examination and achieve certification have demonstrated the necessary job-related knowledge to practice safely as an entry level Medical Assistant. Scores on the NCMA are not intended to predict the degree of success the candidate will achieve as a Medical Assistant. The only statement made about a passing score is that the candidate has met the established performance standard for demonstrating entry level competence, regardless of how far above the examination passing score the candidate performed. Furthermore, candidates who fail to meet the passing score are not judged incompetent; they can only be said to have not yet demonstrated sufficient knowledge to be judged competent for certification by the NCCT.

A criterion-referenced passing score was set to establish what constitutes competency for the NCMA examination. The standard setting method presented by Angoff (1971) was used to establish this passing score. In the body of his work, Angoff (1971) suggested that a passing score be produced by a panel of judges deciding whether a minimally qualified candidate would correctly respond to each item on an instrument. Each judge estimates the percentage likely a minimally competent practitioner is to answer an item correctly. This is known as the percent Angoff method.

Seventeen MA subject matter experts served as the panel for the study. The Angoff standard setting process used in this study was conducted in eight main sequential steps: 1) introducing the standard setting process; 2) developing the minimally competent practitioner (MCP) definition; 3) rating the job tasks on the detailed test plan as easy or hard for minimally competent practitioner; 4) conducting a practice round of ratings on 10 items; 5) conducting the first round of ratings; 6) reviewing impact data in relation to the Round One ratings; 7) conducting the second round of ratings, 8) reviewing impact data in relation to the Round Two ratings, and 9) finalizing the passing score.

In order to finalize the cut score, NCCT and the cut score panel considered the reasonableness of the pass rate in relation to their expectations for the level of knowledge and skill necessary for competent practice and their knowledge of entry level Medical Assistants. They also considered the historical pass rate for the NCCT NCMA. After completing two rounds of ratings, a panel-recommended cut score was sent to the NCCT Board of Testing. On August 13th, 2020 the NCCT Board of Testing formally approved the panel's decision. On August 17th, 2020 new forms with the approved cut score were released for the new National Certified Medical Assistant examination.

