



National Career
Academy Coalition

COLLEGE CAREER LIFE

Master Career Academy Teacher

Certification Handbook

Table of Contents

Introduction

About the National Career Academy Coalition
About the Standards
About the Certification

Underlying Principles

Background of Career Academies
NCAC Standards of Practice

Master Career Academy Teacher Standards

Standard I – **Teaching Philosophy**

Master Career Academy Teachers are seasoned educators.

Standard II – **Classroom Environment**

Master Career Academy teachers understand the classroom environment is the foundation of student learning.

Standard III – **Teacher Leadership**

Master Career Academy teachers possess capabilities and knowledge that are critically needed to strengthen school reform and improvement.

Standard IV – **Professionalism**

Master Career Academy teachers are licensed professionals who practice exemplary behavior.

Standard V – **Lifelong Learning**

Master Career Academy Teachers understand the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and their school community.

Standard VI – **Student Advocacy**

Master Career Academy teachers are student advocates both in and out of the learning environment.

Standard VII – **High Quality Instruction**

Master Career Academy Teachers consistently use research based, culturally responsive, differentiated instructional practices that positively impact student learning.

Standard VIII – **Partner Collaboration**

Master Career Academy Teachers establish and support an environment that welcomes, connects and engages partners with student learning.

Standard IX – **Student Learning**

Master Career Academy Teachers focus on student achievement.

Standard X – **Synergistic Reflection**

Master Career Academy Teachers value continuous improvement.

Instructions for Candidate

Applying for Candidacy
Creating the Portfolio
Submitting the Portfolio

Introduction

About the National Career Academy Coalition

From its inception in 1996, NCAC’s mission has been to provide collaborative support and resources for existing and emerging career academies.

It is our belief that the success of academy students is due to the network of support that they receive from teachers, mentors, and business people that help them set long term goals and stay on a clear path. By joining NCAC you will be connected to experts and practitioners that share your passion for changing the lives of young people.

About the Master Career Academy Teacher Standards

Career academies cannot be successful without the work of dedicated teachers who understand the overall work of an academy. Teachers are a critical stakeholder of career academies. While teachers understand the larger picture of a career academy, successful career academy teachers know how their individual work in the classroom aligns with the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) National Standards of Practice (NSOP) and translates to the unique academy mission.

The Master Career Academy Teacher (MCAT) Standards were developed to further articulate what a successful career academy teacher knows and is able to do as a classroom instructor. Each Master Career Academy Teacher standard is aligned with and situated in the larger context of the related NSOP. For example, NSOP I for career academies is Defined Mission and Goals and MCAT standard I is Teaching Philosophy. When a career academy teacher’s philosophy of teaching aligns with the intention of an academy’s mission and goals, synergy occurs, thus moving the career academy toward mission success.

The MCAT Standards provide an opportunity for career academy teachers to demonstrate what they know and are able to do through the collection of evidence, writing about their practice, and creating a portfolio of their work. The process of undergoing MCAT certification is designed to be reflective, thus enhancing the work of seasoned career academy teachers. The resulting

portfolio demonstrates one of the best professional development experiences a career academy teacher can have during their tenure in that role.

Note that NCAC recognizes that teachers of all content areas provide instruction that is academic. Given that state and local definitions may vary, in this document the word *academic* is used when referencing general education content areas (ELA, math, science, and social studies) to provide clarity and prevent confusion. Further, the word *technical* is used when referencing career and technical education content areas (those recognized by the state education agency as eligible for funding under federal Perkins legislation). This terminology allows those who teach in a global content area (those that may or may not be required of all students such as physical education, art, and foreign language, among others) to pursue certification as well.

About the Certification

Teacher turnover is high across the country and career academies are not immune to this phenomenon. Often, emphasis is placed on training new teachers how to implement the academy model with fidelity but rarely is emphasis placed on recognizing, developing and retaining seasoned academy professionals. The Career Academy Master Teacher Certification provides an opportunity for teachers with 3 or more years of experience teaching in an academy to validate their work through a reflective portfolio based professional development opportunity. Those who undertake the certification process will demonstrate their knowledge of and commitment to the NCAC National Standards of Practice by submitting evidence of how these standards come to life through their instructional practice.

Why Certify?

There are many reasons to become a Career Academy Master Teacher. Career Academy Master Teachers prove their effectiveness in the classroom every day:

- Student Learning - Research on career academies shows that students in career academies experience improved outcomes during and after high school.
- Teacher Craft - Master teachers reflect on their practice, demonstrate their talent in the learning environment, and highlight their commitment to the NCAC Standards of Practice through their daily work.
- Continuous Improvement - By working with a network of stakeholders, master teachers strive for improving instruction and providing high quality, real world experiences that help students realize their potential for college and career success.

Benefits of Certification

- Teachers earning the certification will be recognized in a ceremony at the NCAC annual conference.
- Master teachers may be given opportunities to grow and develop beyond the classroom by contributing to the body of work supporting career academies such as writing blogs, participating in webinars, or delivering professional development sessions.

- Because master teachers are recognized as experts, they may be sought out for leadership positions in their schools and districts.
- Master teachers often serve as academy team leaders and mentors. They may move on to serve as academy coaches or academy administrators.

Underlying Principles

Background of Career Academies

High school career academies date back over forty years and have been a growing presence in the country for the last quarter century, especially in the states that have provided grants for them (CA, FL, AR) and the many cities and districts that have embraced the approach. There are an estimated 7,000 career academies in operation, enrolling about one million students. Extensive research (MDRC experimental study; Johns Hopkins, UC Berkeley quasi-experimental studies) have shown that their impact has been felt from an academic, economic, workforce development, and social perspective, especially for at-risk youth. Career academies are designed to prepare students for both college and careers. They are schools within schools that link students with peers, teachers, and community partners in a structured environment that fosters academic success. The career academy concept has three key elements:

- A small learning community (CLS)
- A college-prep, sequential curriculum with a career theme
- An advisory board that forges partnerships with corporations, higher education institutions, and the community

Teams of teachers (grades 9-12 or 10-12) work across several academic and technical subjects, grouping students in cohorts for these classes and follow a program of study (POS). The advisory board helps to identify a sequential set of experiential components that show students the applications of academic subjects to the career and college field and deliver work-based learning experiences (e.g., shadowing, community service, mentoring, internships and apprenticeships). The career theme can be any of the 16 in the national Career Clusters taxonomy or variations on these (e.g., “green,” health sciences, media arts).

NCAC Standards of Practice

While career academies have grown quickly, for the most part, they have spread in a grassroots fashion. Thus, there are many interpretations of what a career academy is and what a high-quality career academy should look like, as well as many instances where the term “career academy” is used to describe other configurations. To address these concerns, a broad group of organizations supportive of career academies came together to develop a set of ten standards, first issued in 2004. With continued feedback from the field, it was determined that it was appropriate to refine and reaffirm these standards. The standards of practice are:

Standard I – **Defined Mission and Goals**

The career academy has a written definition of its mission, goals, and benchmarks. These are developed by and available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board, and others involved in the academy.

Standard II – Academy Design

An academy has a well-defined design within the high school, reflecting its status as a small learning community.

Standard III – Host Community and High School

Career academies exist in a variety of district and high school contexts, which are important determinants of an academy's success.

Standard IV – Faculty and Staff

Appropriate staff selection, leadership, credentialing, and cooperation are critical to an academy's success.

Standard V – Professional Development and Continuous Learning

Since an academy places teachers and other adults into roles not normally included in their previous training, providing adequate professional development time, leadership, and support is critical.

Standard VI – Governance and Leadership

The academy has a governing structure that incorporates the explicit roles of all stakeholders and the leaders of the advisory board.

Standard VII – Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning within an academy meets or exceeds external standards and college entrance requirements while differing from a comprehensive high school by focusing learning around a theme.

Standard VIII – Employer, Post Secondary Education, and Community Involvement

A career academy links high school to its host community and involves members of the employer, postsecondary education, and civic community in certain aspects of its operation.

Standard IX – Student Assessment

Improvements in student performance are central to an academy's mission. It is important to gather data that reflect whether students are showing improvement and to report these accurately and fairly to maintain the academy's integrity.

Standard X – Sustainability

No new academy functions perfectly. Even well established and highly functioning academies benefit from self-examination and refinement. Ensuring and improving the quality of a career academy requires engaging in a regular cycle of improvement.

Master Career Academy Teacher Standards

Standard I – Teaching Philosophy

Master Career Academy Teachers are seasoned educators. Through years of experience, trial and error, and continuous learning, their teaching philosophies are living documents that evolve to reflect teacher epistemological beliefs, changes in local, state, and federal policy, and trends in educational research. Often, perspectives are altered as a result of teacher-student interactions, careful observations, and intentional reflection on teaching practices that yield enhanced student achievement. The Master Career Academy Teacher is focused on student readiness. Readiness is relative to the individual content area and grade level, and may mean readiness for the next course in a program of study, the next experiential learning opportunity, or the next level of education or workforce experience. They are dedicated to the belief that all students can learn and all students should leave high school ready to successfully participate in society. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Simultaneously prepare students for postsecondary education and career opportunities;
- Promotes experiential learning;
- Values teacher-student relationships;
- Practice non-discriminatory and inclusive pedagogy; and
- Engages in personal professional reflection.

Artifact(s): For Standard I, candidates will submit a personal philosophy of teaching, not to exceed four pages in length. The philosophy of teaching will explicitly communicate teacher beliefs and support these beliefs with practical examples. As a personal document, the philosophy of teaching will not be written with quotations of other authors or references to practitioners or theorists. Instead, the statement should be an authentic piece written in first person, from the teacher's point of view or perspective.

Standard II – Classroom Environment

Master Career Academy teachers understand the classroom environment is the foundation of student learning. MCAT's know how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. They use this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning. MCAT's strive to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are encouraged and welcomed. Teachers use their knowledge of student backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and languages to create engaging PBL's. Students have opportunities to work individually and in teams mimicking what they will be expected to do in internships and in future careers. Student work is regularly displayed creating an inviting physical classroom appearance. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Welcome all students;
- Make supplies, equipment, and resources accessible to all students;
- Display high quality student work; and
- Arrange classrooms to promote individual and group learning opportunities; and

- Facilitate the development of positive relationships and interdependence.

Artifact(s): For standard II, candidates will submit a scaled diagram of the classroom in which they teach, labeling placement and location of essential classroom elements including the teacher desk/work station, student desks, white/chalk boards, doorways, and windows, among others. Each diagram will be followed by photographs as evidence of classroom layout and environment that reflects the actions of Master Career Academy Teachers (bulleted list above). Further, candidates will provide a written description of how the classroom is flexible to promote collaborative learning with different sized groups and designed to support a diverse group of learners. This artifact will not exceed 4 pages.

Standard III – Teacher Leadership

Master Career Academy teachers possess capabilities and knowledge that are critically needed to strengthen school reform and improvement. They are proactively engaged in creating positive change in rules, policies and procedures that support educators and students. They collaborate with colleagues and use information about emerging education, economic and workforce trends when planning instruction. They support colleagues' professional growth by serving in roles such as mentor, department head, team leader, and coach, among others. They harness the skills and expertise of colleagues to address curricular expectations and diverse student needs. Outside of the school, Master Career Academy Teachers are engaged in other professional activities. These may include membership in formal teacher, content-specific, or industry-specific organizations as well as participation in non-formal activities such as book studies or online professional learning communities that support the art and science of teaching. Additionally, they publicly support the work of the academy and strive to secure resources that benefit students. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Hold leadership roles in the academy and/or school;
- Collaborate with other teachers in the academy;
- Coach and mentor other teachers;
- Lead professional learning opportunities;
- Engage in formal and/or non-formal professional activities;
- Write grants and/or work with partners to secure resources; and
- Advocate for the academy by writing and/or speaking publicly.

Artifact(s): For standard III, candidates will submit a narrative description of the involvement with described teacher leadership activities. Each narrative will be supported with evidence in the form of artifacts. Artifacts that support claims may be meeting agendas, email correspondence, conference programs, membership cards, or writing samples (newspapers, blogs, periodicals), among others. This artifact will not exceed 4 pages.

Standard IV – Professionalism

Master Career Academy teachers are licensed professionals who practice exemplary behavior. Interactions with faculty, staff, students, parents, community and business partners are positive and constructive. They are adept at communicating with students' families and work diligently to

recruit students. When problem solving, they collaborate with others and employ a variety of viewpoints to generate insight and produce solutions that propel career academies to higher levels of achievement. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Are licensed by the appropriate certifying body, holding industry certification when appropriate;
- Adhere to professional code of ethics;
- Communicate frequently with the families of students;
- Support academy and school policies and procedures;
- Recruit students to join the academy;
- Place students and the center of collaborative decision making; and
- Address issues creatively and collaboratively.

Artifact(s): For standard IV, candidates will submit a copy of their professional teaching license, a sample of parent/family communication; evidence of involvement in recruitment activities, and a narrative essay responding to the prompt: Describe a time you worked collaboratively with colleagues/peers to solve a problem faced by the academy, addressing the situation, the task at hand, the actions taken, and the end result. This artifact will not exceed 4 pages.

Standard V – Lifelong Learning

Master Career Academy Teachers understand the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and their school community. They are committed to the pursuit of continuous growth and improvement. As such, they realize that teaching in a career academy may require them to fill roles not normally included in their previous training, and therefore are committed to ongoing professional learning. To be successful, they take full advantage of opportunities to enhance their understanding of academic and technical content by working with academy partners. They value the contributions of colleagues that occur through common planning, and they take risks in the classroom by utilizing nontraditional instructional methods that may require participating in formal professional development events, individual study and in depth preparation. They share knowledge gained from various experiences with others. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Commit to ongoing professional growth;
- Engage with academy partners off campus, at the partner location;
- Participate in common planning meetings with other academy teachers;
- Attend professional development activities; and
- Design and facilitate professional learning opportunities.

Artifact(s): For standard V, candidates will submit the following evidence of their commitment to lifelong learning: (a) proof of an externship with an academy partner followed by a narrative of what was learned from that experience; (b) minutes from a common planning meeting substantiating the candidate's attendance and involvement followed by a narrative responding to the following prompt: Explain the advantages and challenges associated with common planning meetings in your academy and how such meetings impact your instruction; (c) proof of participation in professional development (other than externships and common planning)

followed by a narrative of how that experience informed the candidate's teaching practice; and (d) proof of how/when the candidate has designed and facilitated a professional learning activity for others. This artifact will not exceed 8 pages.

Standard VI – Student Advocacy

Master Career Academy teachers are student advocates both in and out of the learning environment. Inside the classroom, they recognize their own biases and make certain that preconceptions based on real or perceived ability differences, exceptionalities, socioeconomic or cultural background, family configuration, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, race, ethnicity, language, religion, age, gender or other demographic characteristics do not distort their relationships with students. Master Career Academy Teachers maintain an open mind and work to counter inequities students encounter in the educational environment. Outside of the classroom, they advocate for students to have access to resources that support success for the whole student (academic, social and emotional). They discuss challenges experienced by students and use support systems that may include other teachers, counselors, administrators, partners, and families to create solutions. They model advocacy behaviors, empowering students to advocate for themselves, and create leadership opportunities for students that support positive youth development. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Mitigate potential effects of implicit biases;
- Ensure student voice exists in the classroom;
- Participate in advisory board meetings with academy partners;
- Encourage student self-advocacy; and
- Develop student leaders.

Artifact(s): For standard VI, candidates will submit a vignette of a student advocacy experience, detailing the student(s) involved, the situation, how the candidate advocated for the student(s), challenges faced when advocating, and the end result. Further, the candidate will provide minutes documenting attendance/involvement in an advisory board meeting. Lastly, the candidate will submit a narrative explaining how they embed social emotional learning (SEL) activities that facilitate voice/sharing as part of the regular student experience and create leadership opportunities for students within the classroom. This artifact will not exceed 6 pages.

Standard VII – High Quality Instruction

Master Career Academy Teachers consistently use research based, culturally responsive, differentiated instructional practices that positively impact student learning. Messages of high expectations are conveyed to all students. They design curriculum and rubrics which clearly communicate learning goals and success criteria aligned to content standards. Instruction is student centered and all students are actively engaged in the learning process, with student identities being positively represented in curricular materials. They understand that delivering high quality instruction is an ongoing process and curriculum frequently changes with social and industry trends and technological advancements. One must continually assess and refine instruction based on student interests and needs. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Set high expectations for student learning;
- Vary instructional methods to reach all learners;
- Reinforce the acquisition of knowledge by requiring authentic application;
- Utilize and create curricular materials that are accessible to all students; and
- Value planning as a reflective process.

Artifact(s): For standard VII, candidates will submit a project-based lesson plan substantiating the candidates attention to the following components of instructional design in career academies: (a) academic standards; (b) technical standards; (c) explicit learning objectives that communicate rigorous expectations; (d) employability skills; (e) global competency; (f) interdisciplinary collaboration; (g) postsecondary connections (including education and the world of work); (h) differentiated instructional strategies; (i) multiple forms of assessment; (j) student voice and choice; (k) real-world application; (l) authentic audience; (m) opportunities for reflection and revision; and (n) a final product. Further, the candidate will provide two examples of student final products resulting from the project-based lesson. Finally, the candidate will provide a narrative of what went well with the lesson and how the lesson will be improved for future use. This artifact will not exceed 10 pages.

Standard VIII – Partner Collaboration

Master Career Academy Teachers establish and support an environment that welcomes, connects and engages partners with student learning. Numerous opportunities exist for partners to be involved in a collaborative decision making process around academy policy development, instructional design, curriculum development, professional development, and real-world learning opportunities. Industry professionals are regularly in the Master Career Academy Teacher's classroom, building relationships and demonstrating how course content relates to the workplace. Teachers work with partners, when appropriate, to prepare students for industry certification exams. They support students in the pursuit of work-based learning (WBL) experiences such as field trips, job shadows, and internships, among others. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Welcomes academy partners as colleagues;
- Plan lessons that incorporate academy partners;
- Encourage students to participate in WBL opportunities;
- Understand WBL takes place both in and out of the classroom; and
- Values the importance of demonstrating real-world application of content standards.

Artifact(s): For standard VII, candidates will submit a scope and sequence for a course taught that includes an instructional calendar which highlights instructional events that incorporate academy partners. Further, candidates will provide at least 3 photos of students engaging in WBL experiences with academy partners (all photos must include the academy partner and a student(s) and at least one photo must be inside the candidate's classroom). Each photo will be followed by a narrative description of the WBL activity, including the name of the partner, their organization, and the WBL experience. This artifact will not exceed 10 pages.

Standard IX – Student Learning

Master Career Academy Teachers focus on student achievement. As part of instructional planning, they design and deliver standards aligned assessments in multiple forms. Before instruction, Master Career Academy Teachers determine where students are (academically and technically) through pre-assessments and work with students to set individual learning goals. Multiple assignments, products, and artifacts are collected as evidence of student progression toward goal attainment and content mastery. They communicate expectations for student performance through bias-free rubrics that minimize subjectivity in grading, thus creating equity in grading practices. Sometimes, rubrics are created through negotiation with individual students to reflect individual growth goals. They know that student learning must be measured in multiple ways throughout a unit in order to make instructional shifts that support students. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Assess academic knowledge and skills, regardless of content area;
- Measure technical knowledge and skills, regardless of content area;
- Evaluate employability knowledge and skills, regardless of content area;
- Use multiple types/categories of assessment throughout a unit; and
- Require students to demonstrate acquisition and application of knowledge and skills at varying levels.

Artifact(s): For Standard IX, candidates will submit assessment plans and scoring rubrics/criteria for at least three (but no more than five) assignments/products in a unit. Each assessment and scoring rubric/criteria will be followed by a narrative explaining how each assignment/product was designed to measure: (a) academic knowledge and skills, (b) technical knowledge and skills, and/or (c) employability knowledge and skills. Specifically, candidates will articulate the knowledge and skills being assessed as evident in the scoring rubric/criteria. The individual assessments submitted should reflect multiple categories of assessment (such as written, performance based, and project-based assessments, among others), at varying levels/cognitive processes aligned with Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. This artifact will not exceed 10 pages.

Standard X – Synergistic Reflection

Master Career Academy Teachers value continuous improvement. Independently, they reflect on their teaching practice as it is situated in the greater scheme of the academy. Collaboratively, they reflect on progress toward the goals of the academy. Through reflective practice, the Master Career Academy Teacher critically examines how their course syllabi and teaching philosophy are aligned and reflected in their instruction. They identify gaps where philosophy and practice are not synchronized and take steps to mitigate misalignment. In addition to setting individual goals for students, they set professional goals for themselves that align with and contribute to the academy's goals. A keen awareness of how the individual teacher's work assists in producing desired outcomes for the academy is a mark of excellence that sets these teachers apart from their peers. As such, Master Career Academy Teachers:

- Communicate expectations to students;
- Identify personal strengths both as a teacher and as a member of a collaborative team;

- Acknowledge mistakes and weaknesses;
- Search for opportunities to improve their craft and the academy;
- Considers how to overcome competing priorities that threaten success; and
- Sets professional goals.

Artifact(s): For Standard X, candidates will submit a syllabus for one course taught. The syllabus will be followed by a narrative description of how it is aligned with the personal philosophy of teaching. Further, candidates will conduct Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analyses of (1) themselves, as a professional teacher, and (2) the academy in which the teacher works. The individual SWOT self-analysis as a professional teacher will be followed by articulated individual professional goals (NOT academy goals) in Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART) format that are clearly aligned with both the weaknesses and threats identified in the SWOT analysis. This artifact will not exceed 10 pages.

Instructions for Candidates

Applying for Candidacy

To become a NCAC Master Career Academy Teacher, eligible candidates must demonstrate advanced knowledge, skill, and practice as an academy teacher by completing an ePortfolio aligned with the Master Career Academy Teacher standards.

To be eligible for Master Career Academy Teacher designation, teachers must:

- Hold a valid professional teaching license;
- Have completed a minimum of 3 years teaching in an Academy setting; and
- Be employed as an academy teacher at the time of portfolio submission.

Timeline

- January 31 - Intent to Apply and fee payment due (deferments honored for one year)
- June 30 - Deadline for submission
- July 1 - August 30 - Scoring of ePortfolios
- August 31 - Applicants informed of score
- November - Recipients honored at NCAC Conference

Cost to Undergo Certification: \$500.00

Cost to Renew Certification: \$250.00 (certification is valid for 5 years)

Getting Started

Candidates should follow these steps in preparing for and completing the e-portfolio:

1. Read the NCAC Master Career Academy Teacher certification handbook and determine if the certification is right for you.

2. Submit an application for candidacy and payment to the National Career Academy Coalition.
3. Begin compiling artifacts as prescribed in each of the standards in the certification handbook (artifacts must be within a 24-month period).

Candidates are strongly encouraged to carefully review and evaluate the substance and significance of the evidence being submitted, as well as consider other evidence you have not submitted; select artifacts that clearly shows you excel in the Master Career Academy Teacher standards for the final submission.

Successful candidates often have a colleague/peer review their application and provide constructive feedback prior to submission. Pay close attention to the page limit requirements for each standard.

Creating the Portfolio

The ePortfolio will be submitted through the NCAC portal in a .pdf format. As such, it is recommended that artifacts be assembled in ONE word processing document with the final version being saved in the appropriate file format (.pdf).

Formatting

Follow the following formatting guidelines to prevent your ePortfolio from being disqualified from scoring:

- Pages should be formatted with 1” margins all the way around
- When writing text, use Times New Roman font, size 12
- Typed text should be double spaced
- Evidence such as photos, emails, agendas, certificates, etc. should be saved pasted into the document as an image. These pieces of evidence DO count toward the total page limit.
- The final portfolio will be submitted as ONE complete document.

Submitting the Portfolio