

2024 Manual of Procedure for Certification



Prepared by the Committee on Professional Certification

Vincent Carr, MM, FRCO, ChM
National Councillor for Education

Gregory Gyllsdorff, MFA, FAGO, ChM

Sarah C. Harr, DMA, FAGO

Christopher Jacobson, MMus, FRCO

André Lash, DMA, FAGO

Wayne Peterson, DSM, FAGO, ChM

David Shuler, MA, FAGO

Joy Schroeder, PhD, DMA, FAGO

Eva Sze, PhD cand., FAGO

American Guild of Organists National Headquarters
and THE AMERICAN ORGANIST Magazine
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115
(212) 870-2310. www.agohq.org. info@agohq.org.



American Guild of Organists Manual of Procedure for Certification

This manual of procedure has been developed to facilitate candidates' preparation for the exams and to aid in ensuring fair and orderly administration of the examinations by the chapter dean, the examination coordinator, the proctors, and the examiners. While some adaptation to specific circumstances can be expected and should be allowed, the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification must first approve any significant modification of these procedures.

The information in this manual serves as a guide to facilitate a uniform, concise, and professional exam experience that is conducted in a manner consistent with the standards of the Guild. Each person involved in the exam – dean, coordinator, proctor, candidate, and examiner – should read the entire manual carefully and thoroughly, with particular attention to the section directed to their specific role.

While maintaining a consistent and orderly exam procedure is the goal of this manual, each person involved in the exam is reminded that the foundation of the Guild's entire certification program rests on people and exists for their benefit. Each person should be dealt with fairly and sensitively, especially where the candidate's needs, aims, and interests are concerned.

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American Guild of Organists

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260

New York, NY 10115

212.870.2310

exams@agohq.org

<http://www.agohq.org>

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Roles and Responsibilities:

CO

Exam Coordinator (CO)

The local chapter's designated examination coordinator [and/or dean] is the person responsible for making certain that the established exam procedures put forth by the Guild are followed scrupulously, with everything being done well, promptly, with complete integrity, and with fairness to the candidate. If the chapter is designated as a general examination center for the Guild certification exam in a particular year, the exam coordinator shall be responsible for the administration of exams in the fall and in the spring and must be a Guild member in good standing. If the chapter is not a general examination center, then the dean shall appoint a coordinator to oversee examinations when there are applications for these.

P

Proctor (P)

The proctor, whose responsibility is to promote prompt, helpful, and efficient conduct of the examinations, is appointed by the chapter dean or exam coordinator and must be a Guild member in good standing. They set the tone and ensure that the candidate is given every advantage during their examination time. Throughout the entire process, the proctor is expected to treat the candidate with courtesy, displaying sensitivity to any anxieties the candidate may have. During the exam, the proctor should refrain from making any sounds or movements which might distract the candidate in any way. The exam coordinator may also serve as the proctor, if necessary.

CA

Candidate (CA)

The Guild's certification program exists for the benefit of individual candidates, and each candidate has the right to have an exam experience that is well-organized and well-executed. It is the candidate's responsibility to study the most up-to-date exam requirements, which can be found on the Guild's website (www.agohq.org). Should there be anything the candidate does not fully understand, they should first ask the appointed Exam Coordinator. If the Exam Coordinator does not know the answer, the candidate can request an explanation or clarification in writing from the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification.

E

Examiner (E)

Qualified examiners are nominated by the exam coordinator and must be Guild members in good standing. They must also hold a Guild certificate at least at the level which they are being asked to evaluate. If a qualified certificate holder is not available, someone else may be nominated who is a Guild member in good standing and who possesses professional expertise, knowledge, and interest in the Guild certification program. The director of the Committee on Professional Certification must approve a non-certificated examiner prior to exam day. If an examiner has a special personal or professional connection with a candidate, it is the responsibility of that examiner to excuse themselves, so that the exam coordinator can find another qualified examiner.

Chapter 1: Service Playing Certificate

The Service Playing Certificate exam may be given at any time between October 1 – March 31. If a candidate cancels their exam, the exam coordinator has the final authority to determine, based on the timing and the reason for the cancellation, whether rescheduling the exam is warranted. No refunds will be given. The SPC exam must be completed by March 31.

SPC Timeline

6+ months before Exam Day:



- Refer potential candidates to the Guild’s website for more information about Guild certification, including free webinars and study materials.
- Publicize all information pertinent to examination application deadlines and procedure through chapter newsletters and at chapter meetings.
- Contact the church/school chosen by the candidate and arrange for the examination, honoring the candidate’s choices whenever possible. The candidate may elect to take the examination at any local chapter, provided that an adequate organ and adequate recording equipment are available. Once an examination site has been chosen, it is the responsibility of the exam coordinator to reserve it for the designated day and time. The use of a pipe organ is strongly recommended. In cases where none is available, an electronic organ may be used, provided it is adequate for the performance of the required repertoire. The instrument at the exam location should possess the following specifications:
 - The candidate is encouraged to take their exam on an organ with which they are familiar, including the church where they regularly play or practice.
 - The instrument must be an organ in good tuning and mechanical condition, with the likelihood that the organ will remain in that state throughout the practice and exam period. Neither the national Guild, nor the local chapter, nor the candidate, nor any other Guild member shall be liable for any expenses incurred in the tuning or repairing of the examination instrument.
 - It must have a variety of stops sufficient for proper performance of the specified organ repertoire and practical skills.
 - It must have levels of memory sufficient for one or more candidates to preset their registrations prior to exam day.
 - The exam location must have an abundant availability of varied practice times during the days immediately preceding the examination. Candidates are entitled to a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours of practice time at the exam location.



- Read all the requirements, application information and deadlines, fee schedule, and examination dates listed on the Guild's website or published in the July issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST. Exams are to be administered on published dates. Exceptions need to be approved in advance by the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification.
- Choose the date and location of the examination, as well as the singer for the solo and psalmody portion of the exam.
- Contact the local dean or exam coordinator to obtain information about online or in-person exam preparation courses.
- Fill out and submit application forms online on the Guild's website with the appropriate fee no later than the application deadline for the examination in question.

3+ months before Exam Day:



- Become familiar with the Manual of Procedure for Certification Exams and current exam requirements posted on the Guild's website.



- In compliance with the AGO's status as an educational, not-for-profit organization, examinations are open to both members and nonmembers. Candidates who do not hold current Guild membership will be subject to a surcharge.
- Candidates who seek dual certification with the National Association of Pastoral Musicians must be members of NPM, must have paid their current dues, and must register online with NPM as well as the AGO, indicating on the AGO application a desire for AGO/NPM joint certification.
- Obtain scores, textbooks, study guides, past examinations (available online), and the Guild's official Examination Hymn Booklet (if applicable).
- The candidate should note that there is a non-refundable portion of the examination fee. Requests for cancellation of an examination must be received at Headquarters 30 days prior to the scheduled date of the examination for a refund to be issued. There is a \$40 processing fee that is non-refundable.

2+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm exam date with the candidate(s).
- Confirm that a duplicate copy of the application sent to National Headquarters was received by the coordinator from the candidate(s). If the chapter coordinator does not have a copy of the application, it should be requested from National Headquarters. The coordinator shall not, under any circumstances, publicize the list of candidates.
- Confirm that the exam location is reserved.
- Appoint a proctor who is a member of the Guild in good standing and who can be depended upon to conduct the examination in a responsible and precise manner, while doing everything possible to set the candidate at ease. No proctor may be appointed who has assisted in preparing any of the candidates. If two proctors are required, the exam coordinator may choose to serve as one of the proctors. The exam coordinator may also serve as the only proctor, if necessary.

1+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm arrangements with the church or school chosen as the exam location and ascertain the days and times when the instrument will be available for practice, as well as the method by which the candidates may schedule their practice periods. The coordinator should reserve those times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates and should be ready to assist out-of-town candidates in arranging additional practice accommodation at other places, should they request it.
- Confirm the schedule with the proctor(s), especially the arrival times, making any adjustments necessitated by candidate cancellations.
- Distribute the exam schedule to candidates, proctors, and exam sites, with the following information:
 - Pencil in names adjacent to candidate numbers only on the copies which go to the proctor(s).
 - On the copy sent to each candidate, write in only that person's name adjacent to the appropriate candidate number.
- Confirm availability and set-up of recording equipment with the candidate and/or the examination site. Refer to the recording protocol in this manual to ensure the quality and format of the recording meets AGO requirements.
- Receive several items from National Headquarters:

- A copy of the candidate's application with the requested exam date and location.
- All details regarding music to be played, including the title, composer, and edition for each organ work and choral anthem.
- Copy of sight-reading test and a code for each candidate, assigned by the Guild.
- Titles of each candidate's organ repertoire selection, hymns, psalm, anthem, and solo accompaniments, and information regarding the singer for the psalmody question.

P

- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule with a list of the candidates' names. The names are to be held in the strictest confidence. The proctors shall also receive copies of this manual and copies of the certification requirements.

CA

- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule, giving the exact time and place of the examination, as well as information on scheduling organ practice sessions. If there is any error in the information concerning the examination, contact the coordinator immediately.
- With assistance from the exam coordinator, arrange practice time on the exam instrument; a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours on the examination organ is allowed. If a candidate must travel from outside the examination center area, they can request additional practice time at another church or school, if it is deemed necessary by the exam coordinator. The coordinator shall make every effort to reserve practice times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates. Candidates are encouraged to keep their registrations as simple as possible to reduce the time required for setting combination pistons. Any questions concerning practice should be directed to the exam coordinator.

1+ week before Exam Day:

CO

- Receive a packet from National Headquarters containing the examinations and a coded list of candidates.
 - Please open the packet immediately and make certain that each examination bears the correct candidate code number.
 - Notify Headquarters right away if there are any errors or omissions.
- Obtain physical copies of this Manual of Procedure and current exam requirements to use as reference during the exam. Distribute additional copies to the proctor.

- Make certain that the instrument(s) to be used will be in good condition on the day of the examination.
- Contact the chapter treasurer and request checks to be issued to the exam coordinator and proctor before exam day. It is also acceptable to mail the checks immediately after exam day. National Headquarters will reimburse the chapter later.

P

- Meet with the exam coordinator to receive copies of the exam and a PDF copy of the hymns chosen from the Examination Hymn Booklet. The proctor must observe the strictest secrecy and divulge the contents of the examinations to no one.
- Receive from the exam coordinator the application forms, announcement format, and sight-reading test.

CA

- Become familiarized with the categories, rubrics, and point distributions outlined on the examiners' mark sheets for the specified exam.
- Prepare all scores, registrations, and pistons prior to exam day, so as not to cause awkward periods of silence in the recording.
- Review guidelines for use of digital media during the playing exam:
 - If a performance is from a tablet or other digital device using electronically/digitally stored and accessed scores, the scanned copy must be a legally owned or downloaded copy, which includes the following possible scenarios:
 - ✓ A scan made from the candidate's own legally owned physical paper score.
 - ✓ A digital score purchased by the candidate from a publisher.
 - ✓ A downloaded IMSLP score from the specifically approved list of IMSLP scores in the Certification requirements.
 - ✓ The scanned copy used for the exam cannot be another person's scanned copy. It must be the candidate's legally owned copy.

Exam Day:

CO

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, verify that the waiting room is ready, the organ is ready for the examination, and the recording equipment is in working order.
- If not serving as a proctor, the coordinator shall nonetheless be available to assist with the resolution of any problems that may arise in the administration of the examination(s).

P

- Verify that the candidate's waiting room is prepared prior to their arrival.
- Upon arrival of the candidate, escort them to the waiting room.
- Verify that the candidate's cell phone is turned off prior to the start of the exam. Preferably, their cell phone should be turned off AND left with the proctor for the entirety of the exam.
- 5 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the organ.
- Bring a metronome for the playing exam to verify tempi with the candidate. Turn pages for the candidate during the exam, if requested to do so, but do not assist the candidate with registration changes. No other page turner shall be allowed into the examination.

CA

- Arrive at the exam site at least 15 minutes prior to your exam. If applicable, avoid contact with other examinees, regardless of whether they have already taken the examination. The candidate is not allowed to bring any materials with them, other than the repertoire pieces for the specified exam, and (if applicable) any prepared hymns, anthems, or accompaniments.
- Begin playing on time and play the parts of the examination as they are announced by the proctor and in the order specified in the certification requirements. The order of the repertoire pieces played is chosen by the candidate. The proctor must have the group order in advance, so that the proper announcement may be made before or during the examination.

Immediately after Exam Day (submitting the exam):

CO

- Upload the candidates' recording (in the preferred format) to the Certification Program office at AGO National Headquarters (<mailto:exams@agohq.org>). The recording must be sent within 5 days of the exam to avoid delays in the grading process.
- Submit reimbursement request to National Headquarters regarding expenses incurred. Reimbursement checks will be mailed directly to the treasurer of the chapter. (Checks will not be made payable to individuals). The Guild will not pay any fee for the use of the church. The reimbursement form is due no later than 30 days after the exam.

1-2 Months after Exam Day:

CA

- Receive notification of the exam results by email within 1-2 months of the receipt of the recorded examination. A mailed letter will follow and will include the candidate's averaged scores and the examiners' comments.
- Successful candidates will receive their certificates directly from National Headquarters. Information about successful candidates, including photos and biographies, will be published in the October edition of The American Organist magazine.
- Successful candidates are entitled and encouraged to use the letters SPC, ChM, CAGO, AAGO, or FAGO after their name.
- Address questions concerning the grading of the exam to the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification (exams@agohq.org).

CO

- Work with the dean of the local chapter to devise appropriate means of publicizing the achievement of successful candidates (if applicable). Recognition in the chapter's marketing materials and at chapter meetings is strongly encouraged.

SPC Exam Procedures

S 1: Prelude Repertoire Piece

S 2: Hymn for Transposition

CA

Candidates should be prepared to play the hymn in the keys indicated in the most recent edition of the Examination Hymn Booklet. Transpositions may not be written out, nor any marks appear on the page of music used for transposing the hymn. The use of pedals is encouraged. The candidate may not play the hymn in the original key first. The candidate will NOT play an introduction to the hymn.

S 3: Psalm

P

The recording does NOT need to be paused or stopped to allow time for the singer to be escorted into or out of the exam area. Examiners can fast-forward through these pauses upon listening to the exam recording. After the psalm, the singer will be seated and remain in the exam area until after their solo.

S 4: Anthem Accompaniment

CA

Play as though accompanying a choir, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- Convincing and decisive sensitivity to text and enabling dedicated singing.
- Confidently judged breaths between stanzas and/or consistently supporting singers through breathing with the text.
- Authoritative and convincing delivery demonstrating clear support of the singers and ethos of text.

S 5: Congregational Hymn #1

CA

The candidate shall play an introduction before the first stanza of the hymn. The introduction should be clear and concise; for example, the first and last phrases of the hymn. The hymn will not be sung during the exam. The candidate, showing that they can be sensitive to the various musical requirements of three different stanzas of the text, may find it appropriate to utilize some of the following techniques: manual changes, phrasing, articulation, registration, soloing out the melody, employing nonharmonic tones, reharmonization, and changes in texture.

S 6: Solo Accompaniment (See S4.)

P

Escort the soloist out of the exam area after their solo. The recording does not need to be paused or stopped.

S 7: Offertory Repertoire Piece (See S1.)

S 8: Sight-Reading Test

P

Place the sight-reading test on the organ music rack and allow up to two minutes for the candidate to scan the test. Signal the candidate to begin playing after about two minutes, or when they are ready. Have a metronome ready to confirm the given tempo with the candidate if they request it.

CA

The sight-reading passage will be printed on three staves, consisting of 8-12 measures with minimal pedal, some chromatic passages, and various aspects of contrapuntal voice leading. Candidates must play the excerpt within the given tempo range. Candidates are expected to play the example with a high level of note accuracy (including pedaling), steady consistent tempo, accurate articulation, and no significant hesitation or stopping. The candidate is entitled to verify the metronome marking with the proctor.

S 9: Congregational Hymn #2 (See S5.)

S 10: Postlude Repertoire Piece (See S1.)

SPC Announcement Script

P

****Confirm the soloist is in place before beginning the recording.***

There is to be total anonymity for the candidate. Name, chapter, geographic location, and personal pronouns may not be disclosed on the recording. Once the recording has begun, there is to be no verbal communication between the candidate and the proctor.

INTRODUCTION (Allow 10 seconds of recording time to run before beginning introduction.)

“This is the Service Playing Exam for Candidate [*give designated code number*]. The instrument to be played is [*name or organ builder and year installed*], with [*number*] manuals and approximately [*number*]ranks.”

S 1: “The Prelude repertoire piece is [*title, composer, edition*], from Group [*letter*].”

S 2: “The hymn for transposition is [*title/first line and number in Examination Hymn Booklet*]. The candidate will play the hymn in the keys indicated in the most recent edition of the Examination Hymn Booklet.”

S 3: “The Psalm for accompaniment is [*number*].”

S 4: “The anthem accompaniment is [*title, composer, edition*].”

S 5: “The first hymn for congregational accompaniment is [*title/first line and number in Examination Hymn Booklet*]. Three stanzas of the hymn will be played.”

S 6: “The solo for accompaniment is [*title, composer, edition*].”

S 7: “The Offertory repertoire piece is [*title, composer, edition*], from Group [*letter*].”

****Place the sight-reading test on the music rack.***

S 8: “The sight-reading test has just been placed in front of the candidate. The candidate has up to two minutes to prepare and will begin playing when they are ready.”

S 9: “The second hymn for congregational accompaniment is [*title/first line and number in Examination Hymn Booklet*]. Three stanzas of the hymn will be played.”

S 10: “The Postlude repertoire piece is [*title, composer, edition*], from Group [*letter*].”

“This is the conclusion of the Service Playing Exam for Candidate [*give designated code number*].”

Chapter 2: Colleague Exam

CAGO Application availability and deadlines are as follows:

For the November CAGO exam: Applications are available after July 1. Application deadline to AGO Headquarters and local chapters is September 15.

For the May CAGO exam: Applications are available after December 1. Application deadline to AGO Headquarters and local chapters is March 15.

Sections of this exam may be taken on the same date, or each section may be taken singly. Any section may be taken again singly if any section was not passed on the first attempt.

CAGO Timeline

6+ months before Exam Day:



- Refer potential candidates to the Guild's website for more information about Guild certification, including free webinars and study materials.
- Publicize all information pertinent to examination application deadlines and procedure through chapter newsletters and at chapter meetings.
- The candidate may elect to take the examination at any local chapter, provided that an adequate organ and adequate recording equipment are available. Once an examination site has been chosen, it is the responsibility of the exam coordinator to reserve it for the designated day and time. The use of a pipe organ is strongly recommended. In cases where none is available, an electronic organ may be used, provided it is adequate for the performance of the required repertoire. The instrument at the exam location should possess the following specifications:
 - It must NOT be an instrument regularly played by the candidate.
 - The instrument must be an organ in good tuning and mechanical condition, with the likelihood that the organ will remain in that state throughout the practice and exam period. Neither the national Guild, nor the local chapter, nor the candidate, nor any other Guild member shall be liable for any expenses incurred in the tuning or repairing of the examination instrument.
 - It must have a variety of stops sufficient for proper performance of the specified organ repertoire and practical skills.
 - It must have levels of memory sufficient for one or more candidates to preset their registrations prior to exam day.
 - The exam location must have an abundant availability of varied practice times during the days immediately preceding the examination. Candidates are entitled to a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours of practice time at the exam location.

CA

- Read all the requirements, application information and deadlines, fee schedule, and examination dates listed on the Guild's website or published in the July issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST. Exams are to be administered on published dates. Exceptions need to be approved in advance by the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification.
- Contact the local dean or exam coordinator to obtain information about online or in-person exam preparation courses.
- Choose the date and location of the examination.
- Fill out and submit application forms online on the Guild's website with the appropriate fee no later than the application deadline for the examination in question.

3+ months before Exam Day:

CO

P

CA

- Become familiar with the Manual of Procedure for Certification Exams and current exam requirements posted on the Guild's website.

CA

- In compliance with the AGO's status as an educational, not-for-profit organization, examinations are open to members and nonmembers. Candidates who do not hold current Guild membership will be subject to a surcharge.
- Candidates who seek dual certification with the National Association of Pastoral Musicians must be members of NPM, must have paid their current dues, and must register online with NPM as well as the AGO, indicating on the AGO application a desire for AGO/NPM joint certification.
- Obtain scores, textbooks, study guides, past examinations (available online), and the Guild's official Examination Hymn Booklet (if applicable).
- The candidate should note that there is a non-refundable portion of the examination fee. Requests for cancellation of an examination must be received at Headquarters 30 days prior to the scheduled date of the examination for a refund to be issued. There is a \$40 processing fee that is non-refundable.

2+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm exam date with the candidate(s).
- Confirm that a duplicate copy of the application sent to National Headquarters was received by the coordinator from the candidate(s). If the chapter coordinator does not have a copy of the

application, it should be requested from National Headquarters. The coordinator shall not, under any circumstances, publicize the list of candidates.

- Confirm that the exam location is reserved.
- Appoint a proctor who is a member of the Guild in good standing and who can be depended upon to conduct the examination in a responsible and precise manner, while doing everything possible to set the candidate at ease. No proctor may be appointed who has assisted in preparing any of the candidates. If two proctors are required, the exam coordinator may choose to serve as one of the proctors. The exam coordinator may also serve as the only proctor, if necessary.

1+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm arrangements with the church or school chosen as the exam location and ascertain the days and times when the instrument will be available for practice, as well as the method by which the candidates may schedule their practice periods. The coordinator should reserve those times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates and should be ready to assist out-of-town candidates in arranging additional practice accommodation at other places, should they request it.
- Confirm the schedule with the proctor(s), especially the arrival times, making any adjustments necessitated by candidate cancellations.
- Distribute the exam schedule to candidates, proctors, and exam sites, with the following information:
 - Pencil in names adjacent to candidate numbers only on the copies which go to the proctor(s).
 - On the copy sent to each candidate, write in only that person's name adjacent to the appropriate candidate number.
- Confirm availability and set-up of recording equipment with the candidate and/or the examination site. Refer to the recording protocol in this manual to ensure the quality and format of the recording meets AGO requirements.
- Arrange for the provision of a preparation room, which must be completely soundproofed from the examination organ and other surrounding noise sources. The preparation room must have a trouble-free, in-tune piano or electric piano.
- Receive several items from National Headquarters:
 - A copy of the candidate's application with the requested exam date and location.
 - All details regarding music to be played, including the title, composer, and edition for each organ work and choral anthem.
 - Copy of sight-reading test and a code for each candidate, assigned by the Guild.
 - Titles of each candidate's organ repertoire selections, hymns, anthems, and solo accompaniments.

P

- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule with a list of the candidates' names. The names are to be held in the strictest confidence. The proctors shall also receive copies of this manual and copies of the certification requirements.

CA

- Become familiarized with the categories, rubrics, and point distributions outlined on the examiners' mark sheets for the specified exam.
- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule, giving the exact time and place of the examination, as well as information on scheduling organ practice sessions. If there is any error in the information concerning the examination, contact the coordinator immediately.
- With assistance from the exam coordinator, arrange practice time on the exam instrument; a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours on the examination organ is allowed. If a candidate must travel from outside the examination center area, they can request additional practice time at another church or school, if it is deemed necessary by the exam coordinator. The coordinator shall make every effort to reserve practice times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates. Candidates are encouraged to keep their registrations as simple as possible to reduce the time required for setting combination pistons. Any questions concerning practice should be directed to the exam coordinator.
- Review guidelines for use of digital media during the playing exam:
 - If a performance is from a tablet or other digital device using electronically/digitally stored and accessed scores, the scanned copy must be a legally owned or downloaded copy, which includes the following possible scenarios:
 - ✓ A scan made from the candidate's own legally owned physical paper score.
 - ✓ A digital score purchased by the candidate from a publisher.
 - ✓ A downloaded IMSLP score from the specifically approved list of IMSLP scores in the Certification requirements.
 - ✓ The scanned copy used for the exam cannot be another person's scanned copy. It must be the candidate's legally owned copy.

1+ week before Exam Day:**CO**

- Receive a packet from National Headquarters (either via email or postal mail) containing the examinations and a coded list of candidates.
 - Please open the packet immediately and make certain that each examination bears the correct candidate code number.
 - Notify Headquarters right away if there are any errors or omissions.

- Obtain physical copies of this Manual of Procedure and current exam requirements to use as reference during the exam. Distribute additional copies to the proctor.
- Make certain that the instrument(s) to be used will be in good condition on the day of the examination.
- Distribute printed copies of the hymn chosen by each candidate (for item C.4) to the proctor, in case the candidate forgets to bring copies, as well as copies of the exam and sight-reading and transposition test.
- Contact the chapter treasurer and request checks to be issued to the exam coordinator and proctor before exam day. It is also acceptable to mail the checks immediately after exam day. National Headquarters will reimburse the chapter later.

P

- Meet with the exam coordinator to receive copies of the exam and a PDF copy of the hymns chosen from the Examination Hymn Booklet. The proctor must observe the strictest secrecy and divulge the contents of the examinations to no one.
- Receive from the exam coordinator the application forms, announcement format, and sight-reading test.

Exam Day:

CO

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, verify that the waiting room is ready, the organ is ready for the examination, and the recording equipment is in working order.
- If not serving as a proctor, the coordinator shall nonetheless be available to assist with the resolution of any problems that may arise in the administration of the examination(s).

P

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, confirm that the organ is ready, the recording equipment is prepared, and the waiting room is open and ready for the candidate(s).
- Verify that the examination room (where written test occurs) and the preparation room (where the candidate goes prior to the playing exam) is stocked with sharpened pencils, plain paper, lined paper, and manuscript paper, and that the piano placement is correct.
- 30 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the preparation room and give them a copy of their exam, minus the sight-reading test. When the preparation period has ended, escort the candidate to the waiting room and return to the preparation room to meet the next candidate (if applicable).
- 5 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the organ. Verify the order of the prepared pieces with the candidate to allow adequate time for the proctor to alter the script, if necessary.
- Verify that the candidate's cell phone is turned off prior to the start of the exam. Preferably, their cell phone should be turned off AND left with the proctor for the entirety of the exam.

- Ask the candidate which option they have chosen for questions C-6 and C-8.
- Bring a metronome for the playing exam to verify tempi with the candidate. Turn pages for the candidate during the exam, if requested to do so, but do not assist the candidate with registration changes. No other page turner shall be allowed into the examination.

CA

- Arrive at the exam site at least 35 minutes prior to your exam. Preparation time will begin 30 minutes before the exam is scheduled. If applicable, avoid contact with other examinees, regardless of whether they have already taken the examination. The candidate is not allowed to bring any materials with them, other than the repertoire pieces for the specified exam, and (if applicable) any prepared hymns, anthems, or accompaniments. Begin playing on time and play the parts of the examination as they are announced by the proctor and in the order specified in the certification requirements.

Immediately after Exam Day (submitting the exam):

CO

- Submit the candidates' examination paperwork and upload their recording (in the preferred format) to the Certification Program office at AGO National Headquarters (<mailto:exams@agohq.org>). The materials must be sent within 5 days of the exam to avoid delays in the grading process.
- Submit reimbursement request to National Headquarters regarding expenses incurred. Reimbursement checks will be mailed directly to the treasurer of the chapter. (Checks will not be made payable to individuals). The Guild will not pay any fee for the use of the church. The reimbursement form is due no later than 30 days after the exam.

1-2 Months after Exam Day:

CA

- Receive notification of the exam results by email within 1-2 months of the receipt of the recorded examination. A mailed letter will follow and will include the candidate's averaged scores, paperwork, and the examiners' comments.
- Upon completion of all sections, successful candidates will receive their certificates directly from National Headquarters. Information about successful candidates, including photos and biographies, will be published in the October edition of The American Organist magazine.
- Successful candidates are entitled and encouraged to use the letters SPC, ChM, CAGO, AAGO, or FAGO after their name.
- Address questions concerning the grading of the exam to the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification (exams@agohq.org).



- If applicable, work with the dean of the local chapter to devise appropriate means of publicizing the achievement of successful candidates. Recognition in the chapter’s marketing materials and at chapter meetings is encouraged.

CAGO Exam Procedures

*CAGO candidates may choose the order in which they would like to complete each section. They must notify the exam coordinator and/or the proctor prior to the exam so they can accommodate any logistical changes that need to be made prior to the exam. When a candidate is taking BOTH sections, there are only two options for the order of sections:

Option 1: Preparation Time
 Section 1
 Section 2

OR,

Option 2: Preparation Time
 Section 2
 Section 1

Section 1



5 minutes before the playing exam is scheduled to begin, escort the candidate to the organ and confirm the candidate has their copies of the two hymns they are playing for C-4. If they are seeking dual AGO/NPM certification, they should have selected the NPM requirements for both C-4 and C-6. Allow the candidate five minutes to arrange their scores and check their registrations.



The pedals may be used for any of the keyboard tests but are required for the sight-reading portion. Registrations for the keyboard tests should be simple but not necessarily soft: 8’ and 4’ flutes or principals are recommended.

C 1: Prepared Pieces

C 2: Anthem Accompaniment



Play as though accompanying a choir, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- Convincing and decisive sensitivity to text and enabling dedicated singing.

- Confidently judged breaths between stanzas and/or consistently supporting singers through breathing with the text.
- Authoritative and convincing delivery demonstrating clear support of the singers and ethos of text.

C 3: Solo Accompaniment

C4: Hymn



The introduction and various elements of the hymn accompaniments can be written out in advance or drawn from published repertoire. Play an introduction that is different from a mere “play-through” of the hymn and does not exceed two minutes in length. The stanzas must be contrasted in some way, and an “Amen” should not be played unless it is printed. Soloing out the melody for one of the stanzas is desired, but not required.

C 5: Sight Reading



Place the sight-reading test on the organ music rack and allow up to two minutes for the candidate to scan the test. Signal the candidate to begin playing after about two minutes, or when they are ready. Have a metronome ready to confirm the given tempo with the candidate if they request it.



The sight-reading passage will be printed on three staves, consisting of 8-12 measures with minimal pedal, some chromatic passages, and various aspects of contrapuntal voice leading. Candidates must play the excerpt within the given tempo range. Candidates are expected to play the example with a high level of note accuracy (including pedaling), steady consistent tempo, accurate articulation, and no significant hesitation or stopping. The candidate is entitled to verify the metronome marking with the proctor.

C 6: Hymn or Folk Tune Harmonization



Place the appropriate page of the exam on the music rack and allow the candidate to scan for up to 2 minutes. Announce the candidate’s choice – a, b, or c.



The hymn tune harmonization should be done in four-part, note-against-note hymn style at a moderate tempo (1 beat = 68-72). Solo-with-accompaniment texture is recommended for the folk-style harmonization.

C 7: Transposition

CA

Candidates should be prepared to transpose the example in the indicated keys. Transpositions may not be written out, nor any marks appear on the page of music used for transposing the example. The use of pedals is encouraged.

The candidate is NOT permitted to play the transposition example in the original key at the time of the examination. The two transpositions are considered one test, so the candidate should proceed from the first transposition to the second as soon as they are ready to do so.

P

Bring a clean copy of the transposition example for the candidate to use during the exam. Verify that the candidate is playing the required transpositions, and if the candidate does not play them in the specified keys, the proctor shall communicate that fact by an announcement at the end of the recording and by a written memo to accompany the recording when it is emailed to National Headquarters for evaluation.

C 8: Figured Bass, Lead Sheet, or Improvisation

CA

In option A of question C-8, play the figured bass example in a steady rhythm of approximately 1 beat = 60. Since no melody is given, the candidate is expected to achieve reasonably good voice-leading in the chords.

In option C of question C-8, the latter portion of the first designated hymn shall be played prior to the modulating bridge, and the opening phrase of the second hymn after it; it is desirable, but not required, to incorporate melodic material from one or both hymns into the modulatory passage.

P

At the conclusion of item C-8, the proctor shall dismiss the candidate. The proctor should refrain from giving the candidate any assessment, positive or negative, of their performance. Five minutes in advance of the next examination, the proctor will escort the next candidate from the waiting room to the organ. The candidate may retain their copy of the examination, including the sight-reading test, but must not show this to anyone. The candidate may also retain any worksheets.

CAGO Exam Day Schedule



When there are multiple CAGO candidates present, each candidate is scheduled for forty minutes, with five-minute intervals in-between, and a twenty- minute rest period after each third candidate. Each candidate is allowed five minutes in the waiting room after the preparation period, and five minutes at the console to arrange scores and check pistons.

Section 1 and 2 Schedule (Organ Repertoire and Keyboard Skills):

- 8:30 a.m. The candidate arrives and begins their preparation period in the designated area.
- 8:50 a.m. The candidate is escorted to the waiting room.
- 8:55 a.m. The candidate is escorted to the organ to arrange scores and check pistons.
- 9:00 a.m. The candidate plays either Section 1 first, immediately followed by Section 2, or Section 2 first, immediately followed by Section 1.
- 9:45 a.m. The candidate is dismissed.
- 12:15 p.m. The proctor arrives to make sure the organ and waiting room are in order.
- 12:30 p.m. The candidate arrives and proceeds to the waiting room.
- 12:55 p.m. The proctor escorts the candidate from the waiting room to the organ.
- 1:00 p.m. The candidate plays section 2 of the examination.

Section 3 Schedule (Paperwork) – beginning Spring 2025

- 8:30 a.m. The proctor arrives to make sure the waiting room and examination rooms are in order.
- 8:55 a.m. The candidate arrives and is escorted to the examination room with a copy of their exam.
- 9:00 a.m. Section 3 of the exam begins.
- 11:00 a.m. Section 3 concludes.

CAGO Announcement Script

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There is to be total anonymity for the candidate. Name, chapter, geographic location, and personal pronouns may not be disclosed on the recording. Once the recording has begun, there is to be no verbal communication between the candidate and the proctor.

**To the Proctor- Please adjust the script accordingly if the candidate is taking both sections of the exam and elects to begin with Section 2, or if the candidate is taking only Section 2 of the exam.*

INTRODUCTION (Allow 10 seconds of recording time to run before beginning introduction.)

"This is the Colleague Examination [*if only one section is being taken, specify here*] for Candidate number [*give designated code number*]. The instrument to be used is [*name of organ builder and year installed*] of [*number*] manuals and approximately [*number*] ranks." If further information is necessary, such as "tracker action," or "completely unenclosed." please state it here.

*(*If only section 2 is being taken, skip to item C 5.)*

C 1: "The first repertoire piece, from Group [A, B, or C] is [*title, composer, edition*]."

At the conclusion of this first work,

"The second repertoire piece, from Group [A, B, or C] is [*title, composer, edition*]."

At the conclusion of this second work,

"The third repertoire piece, from Group [A, B, or C] is [*title, composer, edition*]."

At the conclusion of the third work,

C 2: "The candidate will play the accompaniment to the choral work, [*title, composer, edition*]."

At the conclusion of the choral accompaniment,

C 3 "The candidate will play the accompaniment to the solo work, [*title, composer, edition*]."

At the conclusion of the solo accompaniment,

C 4: "The candidate will play [*title of hymn*] from the AGO Examination Hymn Booklet."

**If only section 1 is being taken...*

"This completes the Colleague examination for Candidate number [#]."

**If the candidate is taking section 2...*

At the conclusion of the hymn,

C 5: "The sight-reading page has just been placed on the candidate's music rack. The candidate has up to two minutes to scan the music before playing the passage."

At the conclusion of the sight-reading test,

C 6: "The candidate has elected to do [the hymn tune harmonization/the folk-style melody accompaniment/the plainsong melody harmonization]."

At the conclusion of the harmonization/accompaniment,

C 7: "The candidate will transpose the given passage in the indicated keys."

At the conclusion of the second transposition,

C 8: "The candidate has elected to do C 8 [a, b, or c]."

At the conclusion of the lead sheet/figured bass/improvisation,

"This completes the Colleague examination for candidate number [#]."

Coordinator/Proctor Protocol for Recording Exams:



- Use a relatively new device to record the exam, e.g., a portable recorder (e.g., Zoom handy recorder), a smart phone, or the sound system at the church/school where the exam is taking place.
- If microphones are being used, make sure they are positioned at an appropriate distance from the pipework, but close enough to the proctor and/or singer to be heard clearly.
- The exam Coordinator is responsible for the quality of the recording – significant reverberation, outside noises, and any other factors that may negatively affect the clarity of the recording should be reduced or eliminated as much as possible.
- MIDI recording devices that are interfaced with the organ are not acceptable for submission. The instrument must be recorded as it sounds in the room.
- Be sure to test the volume level of the recording prior to the exam, keeping in mind that the volume may need to be adjusted accordingly for the loudest and softest sections of the exam. Confirm that all registrations chosen by the candidate are clearly audible on the recording prior to the start of the exam.
- Do NOT edit completed recordings in any way prior to submission.
- Allow adequate time after the exam to upload your audio file ahead of the submission deadline. Depending on the device that was used, Wi-Fi connectivity, and recording format, uploading speeds may vary considerably.
- Files should be submitted via <http://www.wetransfer.com>. Uploaded files must be in a .wav format.
- Label the file using only the candidate code, to keep the identity of the candidate anonymous.
- Save the file in a secure location for a minimum of three months after submission, as well as the receipt verifying that the file transfer was successful.
- Set the recording device to record exams in .wav format, verifying that the device has appropriate storage for a file of up to 1.5 GB for a 35- to 40-minute recording of each exam. In the case of multiple exams in one day at the same location, the recording equipment operator may need to use an external storage device to transfer the file after each exam.

Note for ChM, AAGO, and FAGO exams:



All exams will be audio recorded by the exam coordinator for archival purposes, and to clarify any conflicting marks, if necessary. The ChM exam will also be video recorded by the exam coordinator.

Chapter 3: Choir Master Examination

Both sections of the Choir Master Exam, or either section alone, can be taken within a given year. When only one section is passed, the remaining section must be passed within the five succeeding years. The candidate must pass both sections to achieve that level of certification. Candidates only taking section 2 (paperwork) may elect to do so at any chapter. It is not necessary to go to an exam center. If the candidate chooses this option, they should contact both the dean of the local chapter and AGO National Headquarters. No one shall be present at the examination except the candidate, the proctor, the singers, an accompanist if requested, and the exam coordinator (at their own discretion). Section 1 will need to be video recorded and sent to AGO headquarters immediately following the examination.

The candidate should be prepared to cope with unplanned inaccuracies and insecurities on the part of the singers and the accompanist, just as what might occur in any rehearsal. The candidate may request that the examination site provides an accompanist to be used at the candidate's discretion and direction. The candidate is not permitted to provide their own accompanist.

ChM Timeline

6+ months before Exam Day:



- Refer potential candidates to the Guild's website for more information about Guild certification, including free webinars and study materials.
- Publicize all information pertinent to examination application deadlines and procedure through chapter newsletters and at chapter meetings.



- Arrange for an exam location with the following provisions:
 - Soundproof waiting room.
 - A rehearsal room with a well-tuned piano or keyboard situated so that the candidate and accompanist have unobstructed sightlines. The size of the room must accommodate four singers placed at an optimum distance from the conductor.
 - Examination room for the paperwork portion of the exam, also equipped with a piano or keyboard.
- Once an examination site has been chosen, it is the responsibility of the exam coordinator to reserve it for the designated day and time.



- Read all the requirements, application information and deadlines, fee schedule, and examination dates listed on the Guild's website or published in the July issue of THE AMERICAN

ORGANIST. Exams are to be administered on published dates. Exceptions need to be approved in advance by the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification.

- Contact the local dean or exam coordinator to obtain information about online or in-person exam preparation courses.
- Fill out and submit application forms online on the Guild's website with the appropriate fee no later than the application deadline for the examination in question.

3+ months before Exam Day:



- Become familiar with the Manual of Procedure for Certification Exams and current exam requirements posted on the Guild's website.



- In compliance with the AGO's status as an educational, not-for-profit organization, examinations are open to members and nonmembers. Candidates who do not hold current Guild membership will be subject to a surcharge.
- Obtain scores, textbooks, study guides, past examinations (available online), and the Guild's official Examination Hymn Booklet (if applicable).
- The candidate should note that there is a non-refundable portion of the examination fee. Requests for cancellation of an examination must be received at Headquarters 30 days prior to the scheduled date of the examination for a refund to be issued. There is a \$40 processing fee that is non-refundable.

2+ months before Exam Day:



- Confirm exam date with the candidate(s).
- Confirm that a duplicate copy of the application sent to National Headquarters was received by the coordinator from the candidate(s). If the chapter coordinator does not have a copy of the application, it should be requested from National Headquarters. The coordinator shall not, under any circumstances, publicize the list of candidates.
- Confirm that the exam location is reserved.
- Appoint a proctor who is a member of the Guild in good standing and who can be depended upon to conduct the examination in a responsible and precise manner, while doing everything possible to set the candidate at ease. No proctor may be appointed who has assisted in preparing any of the candidates. If two proctors are required, the exam coordinator may choose to serve as one of the proctors. The exam coordinator may also serve as the only proctor, if necessary.

1+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Secure copies of the required scores in the specified editions for each singer.
- Confirm the schedule with the proctor(s), especially the arrival times, making any adjustments necessitated by candidate cancellations.
- Confirm all pertinent exam information has been received by National Headquarters, including:
 - Editions to be used for anthems where none is specified in the requirements.
 - Specify whether the candidate wishes to have an accompanist for the examination.
- Distribute the exam schedule to candidates, proctors, singers, and exam sites, with the following information:
 - Pencil in names adjacent to candidate numbers only on the copies which go to the proctor(s).
 - On the copy sent to each candidate, write in only that person's name adjacent to the appropriate candidate number. Include complete instructions for arranging practice time (contact name, telephone number, days, and times available for practice), as well as a reminder that each candidate is entitled to a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours of practice time at the exam location.
 - All copies of the schedule shall include the location of and access to the waiting room.
- The coordinator should reserve those times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates and should be ready to assist out-of-town candidates in arranging additional practice accommodation at other places, should they request it.
- Confirm exam day arrangements with the singers.

P

- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule with a list of the candidates' names. The names are to be held in the strictest confidence. The proctors shall also receive copies of this manual and copies of the certification requirements.

CA

- Become familiarized with the categories, rubrics, and point distributions outlined on the examiners' mark sheets for the specified exam.
- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule, giving the exact time and place of the examination, as well as information on scheduling organ practice sessions. If there is any error in the information concerning the examination, contact the coordinator immediately.
- With assistance from the exam coordinator, arrange practice time on the exam instrument; a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours on the examination organ is allowed. If a candidate must travel from outside the examination center area, they can request additional practice time at another church or school, if it is deemed necessary by the exam coordinator. The coordinator shall make every effort to reserve practice times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates. Candidates are encouraged to keep their registrations as simple as

possible to reduce the time required for setting combination pistons. Any questions concerning practice should be directed to the exam coordinator.

- Review guidelines for use of digital media during the playing exam:
 - If a performance is from a tablet or other digital device using electronically/digitally stored and accessed scores, the scanned copy must be a legally owned or downloaded copy, which includes the following possible scenarios:
 - ✓ A scan made from the candidate's own legally owned physical paper score.
 - ✓ A digital score purchased by the candidate from a publisher.
 - ✓ A downloaded IMSLP score from the specifically approved list of IMSLP scores in the Certification requirements.
 - ✓ The scanned copy used for the exam cannot be another person's scanned copy. It must be the candidate's legally owned copy.

1+ week before Exam Day:

CO

- Receive a packet from National Headquarters (either via email or postal mail) containing the examinations and a coded list of candidates.
 - Please open the packet immediately and make certain that each examination bears the correct candidate code number.
 - Notify Headquarters right away if there are any errors or omissions.
- Obtain physical copies of this Manual of Procedure and current exam requirements to use as reference during the exam. Distribute additional copies to the proctor.
- Make certain that the instrument(s) to be used will be in good condition on the day of the examination.
- Contact the chapter treasurer and request checks to be issued to the exam coordinator and proctor before exam day. It is also acceptable to mail the checks immediately after exam day. National Headquarters will reimburse the chapter later.

P

- Meet with the exam coordinator to receive copies of the exam. The proctor must observe the strictest secrecy and divulge the contents of the examinations to no one.

Exam Day:

CO

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, verify that the waiting room, quiet room, and rehearsal room are ready, and the video and/or audio recording equipment is in working order.
- If not serving as a proctor, the coordinator shall nonetheless be available to assist with the resolution of any problems that may arise in the administration of the examination(s).

P

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, verify that the quiet room and the waiting room are stocked with sharpened pencils, plain paper, lined paper, and manuscript paper, and that the piano placement is correct in the quiet room.
- Escort the candidate to the waiting room upon their arrival.
- 5 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the rehearsal room.
- Verify that the candidate's cell phone is turned off prior to the start of the exam. Preferably, their cell phone should be turned off AND left with the proctor for the entirety of the exam.

CA

- Arrive at the exam site at least 15 minutes prior to your exam. If applicable, avoid contact with other examinees, regardless of whether they have already taken the examination. The candidate is not allowed to bring any materials with them, other than the repertoire pieces for the specified exam, and (if applicable) any prepared hymns, anthems, or accompaniments. Begin playing on time and play the parts of the examination as they are announced by the proctor and in the order specified in the certification requirements.

Immediately after Exam Day (submitting the exam):

CO

- Submit the candidates' examination paperwork and upload their video recording (in the preferred format) to the Certification Program office at AGO National Headquarters (<mailto:exams@agohq.org>). The materials must be sent within 5 days of the exam to avoid delays in the grading process.
- Submit reimbursement request to National Headquarters regarding expenses incurred. Reimbursement checks will be mailed directly to the treasurer of the chapter. (Checks will not be made payable to individuals). The Guild will not pay any fee for the use of the church. The reimbursement form is due no later than 30 days after the exam.

1-2 Months after Exam Day:

CA

- Receive notification of the exam results by email within 1-2 months of the receipt of the recorded examination materials. A mailed letter will follow and will include the candidate's averaged scores and the examiners' comments.
- Successful candidates will receive their certificates directly from National Headquarters. Information about successful candidates, including photos and biographies, will be published in the October edition of The American Organist magazine.
- Successful candidates are entitled and encouraged to use the letters SPC, ChM, CAGO, AAGO, or FAGO after their name.
- Address questions concerning the grading of the exam to the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification (exams@agohq.org).

CO

- If applicable, work with the dean of the local chapter to devise appropriate means of publicizing the achievement of successful candidates (if applicable). Recognition in the chapter's marketing materials and at chapter meetings is encouraged.

ChM Exam Procedures

Ch 1: Rehearsing/Performing Anthems and Solos

CA

Be certain to include both rehearsal and performance of some portion of each of the specified anthems. Conduct the anthems, directing either from the piano or at the conductor's stand. The candidate may elect to rehearse an anthem with piano, then perform that anthem unaccompanied. Be prepared to demonstrate the following:

- A thorough command of rehearsal techniques, as well as command of the various aspects of good choral sound and interpretation, for all the styles represented in the specified anthems.
- A thorough command of the situation, organizing the physical space and the time to maximum advantage, and controlling the performance forces with maximum authority and understanding.
- A mastery of methods of breathing, tone production, purity of vowels, and clear enunciation with a detailed and completely convincing grasp of a single approach to choral/vocal technique.

Ch 2: Keyboard Skills

P

Place the keyboard tests in front of the candidate, who is seated at the piano.

CA

Scan the keyboard test for up to two minutes, then begin playing. The keyboard test will include the following:

- Harmonizing a melody using primary chords.
- Reading a four-part hymn tune from the Examination Hymn Booklet. (Hymn tune to be specified by the Certification Committee.)
- Playing harmonic progressions and cadences.

This concludes the practical portion of the exam.

Ch 3: Ear Tests

P

Play the pre-recorded ear test for the candidate. After the fourth playing, the candidate has three minutes to complete the test.

For the second ear test, the candidate has one version of a passage in hymn style. The proctor will play a pre-recorded version, in which the chord voicing, chord positions, nonharmonic tones, tied notes, rhythm, etc. are different from the candidate's version.

CA

Write the first ear test on the provided worksheet, then transfer it to the staff on the examination sheet.

Circle on the exam the note(s) that are different from the recording, as well as the spaces which would be occupied by any additional notes heard on the recording.

Ch 4: Analysis

Ch 5: Gregorian Chant

Ch 6: Hymnody

Ch 7: Liturgy

Ch 8: Choral Training

Ch 9: Choral Repertoire

Ch 10: Aural Perception

This concludes the written portion of the exam.

ChM Exam Day Schedule



Choir Rehearsal & Keyboard Tests:

- 8:30 a.m. The proctor arrives and prepares the rehearsal room for the exam, setting the location of the piano, conductor's stand and chairs for the singers.
- 8:45 a.m. Singers, and accompanist (if applicable) arrive, and are escorted to the rehearsal room. The candidate arrives and goes to the waiting room.
- 8:55 a.m. The proctor escorts the candidate from the waiting room and assists the candidate in making their final arrangements for the rehearsal room equipment.
- 9:00 a.m. Candidate takes the practical portion of the exam.

Paperwork Section:

- 12:30 p.m. The proctor arrives and prepares the examination room for the exam, with the writing desks placed far apart (if multiple candidates are present).
- 12:55 p.m. Candidate(s) arrive in the examination room.
- 1:00 p.m. Candidate(s) take the exam.
- 4:00 p.m. The proctor collects all examination papers and gives them to the exam coordinator to scan and email to AGO National Headquarters.

Chapter 4: Associateship & Fellowship Exams

The paperwork portions of the Associateship and Fellowship examinations may be given separately by any AGO chapter, not necessarily a chapter that has been designated as an exam center. Once the candidate has electronically submitted their exam application to National Headquarters, an exam coordinator will be appointed for that candidate for the sole purpose of overseeing their written examination. The playing portion of the exams need to be recorded (audio only) and submitted to AGO national headquarters immediately following the examination.

Sections of this exam may be taken on the same date, or each section may be taken singly. Any section may be taken again singly if any section was not passed on the first attempt.

It is especially important that the organ chosen for the practical portion of the AAGO/FAGO exam is adequate for the repertoire pieces chosen by the candidate. The designated repertoire for the upper-level exams is typically more demanding and requires more organ capabilities, including multiple memory levels and pistons, 3 or more manuals, with 2 or more manuals under expression. Also, the organ must not be one that the candidate has played regularly or can access in an unlimited capacity. The 3-hour minimum/6-hour maximum for practice time still applies.

Anonymity is of the utmost importance to preserve the integrity of the AAGO/FAGO practical exams. The designated exam location must have the flexibility to be situated in a way that prevents the candidate from being seen while they are seated at the organ. Before, during, and after the exam, all reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent disclosure of the identity or the gender of the candidate.

The use of pedal in the AAGO keyboard tests is left to the discretion of the candidate, except where the test is written on three staves with a clearly indicated pedal part. The use of the pedals in the FAGO keyboard tests is strongly recommended, but not required unless indicated as such.

AAGO/FAGO Timeline

6+ months before Exam Day:



- Refer potential candidates to the Guild's website for more information about Guild certification, including free webinars and study materials.
- Publicize all information pertinent to examination application deadlines and procedure through chapter newsletters and at chapter meetings.



- The candidate may elect to take the examination at any local chapter, provided that an adequate organ and adequate recording equipment are available. Once an examination site has been chosen, it is the responsibility of the exam coordinator to reserve it for the designated day and time. The use of a pipe organ is strongly recommended. In cases where none is available, an electronic organ may be used, provided it is adequate for the performance of the

required repertoire. The instrument at the exam location should possess the following specifications:

- It must NOT be an instrument regularly played by the candidate.
- The instrument must be an organ in good tuning and mechanical condition, with the likelihood that the organ will remain in that state throughout the practice and exam period. Neither the national Guild, nor the local chapter, nor the candidate, nor any other Guild member shall be liable for any expenses incurred in the tuning or repairing of the examination instrument.
- It must have a variety of stops sufficient for proper performance of the specified organ repertoire and practical skills.
- It must have levels of memory sufficient for one or more candidates to preset their registrations prior to exam day.
- The exam location must have an abundant availability of varied practice times during the days immediately preceding the examination. Candidates are entitled to a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours of practice time at the exam location.

CA

- Read all the requirements, application information and deadlines, fee schedule, and examination dates listed on the Guild's website or published in the July issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST. Exams are to be administered on published dates. Exceptions need to be approved in advance by the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification.
- Choose the date and location of the examination.
- Contact the local dean or exam coordinator to obtain information about online or in-person exam preparation courses.
- Fill out and submit application forms online on the Guild's website with the appropriate fee no later than the application deadline for the examination in question.

3+ months before Exam Day:

CO

P

CA

- Become familiar with the Manual of Procedure for Certification Exams and current exam requirements posted on the Guild's website.

CA

- In compliance with the AGO's status as an educational, not-for-profit organization, examinations are open to members and nonmembers. Candidates who do not hold current Guild membership will be subject to a surcharge.
- Obtain scores, textbooks, study guides, past examinations (available online), and the Guild's official Examination Hymn Booklet (if applicable).

- The candidate should note that there is a non-refundable portion of the examination fee. Requests for cancellation of an examination must be received at Headquarters 30 days prior to the scheduled date of the examination for a refund to be issued. There is a \$40 processing fee that is non-refundable.

2+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm exam date with the candidate(s).
- Confirm that a duplicate copy of the application sent to National Headquarters was received by the coordinator from the candidate(s). If the chapter coordinator does not have a copy of the application, it should be requested from National Headquarters. The coordinator shall not, under any circumstances, publicize the list of candidates.
- Confirm that the exam location is reserved.
- Appoint a proctor who is a member of the Guild in good standing and who can be depended upon to conduct the examination in a responsible and precise manner, while doing everything possible to set the candidate at ease. No proctor may be appointed who has assisted in preparing any of the candidates. If two proctors are required, the exam coordinator may choose to serve as one of the proctors. The exam coordinator may also serve as the only proctor, if necessary.

1+ months before Exam Day:

CO

- Confirm arrangements with the church or school chosen as the exam location and ascertain the days and times when the instrument will be available for practice, as well as the method by which the candidates may schedule their practice periods. The coordinator should reserve those times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates and should be ready to assist out-of-town candidates in arranging additional practice accommodation at other places, should they request it.
- Confirm the schedule with the proctor(s), especially the arrival times, making any adjustments necessitated by candidate cancellations.
- Distribute the exam schedule to candidates, proctors, and exam sites, with the following information:
 - Pencil in names adjacent to candidate numbers only on the copies which go to the proctor(s).
 - On the copy sent to each candidate, write in only that person's name adjacent to the appropriate candidate number.
 - All copies of the schedule shall include the location of and access to the preparation room and/or waiting room.

- Confirm availability and set-up of recording equipment with the candidate and/or the examination site. Refer to the recording protocol in this manual to ensure the quality and format of the recording meets AGO requirements.
- Confirm the recording method and equipment status with the candidate to ensure that everything is in working order and the recording quality/format meets AGO standards.
- Arrange for the provision of a preparation room, which must be completely soundproofed from the examination organ and other surrounding noise sources.

P

- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule with a list of the candidates' names. The names are to be held in the strictest confidence. The proctors shall also receive copies of this manual and copies of the certification requirements.

CA

- Become familiarized with the categories, rubrics, and point distributions outlined on the examiners' mark sheets for the specified exam.
- Receive from the coordinator an examination schedule, giving the exact time and place of the examination, as well as information on scheduling organ practice sessions. If there is any error in the information concerning the examination, contact the coordinator immediately.
- With assistance from the exam coordinator, arrange practice time on the exam instrument; a minimum of three hours and a maximum of six hours on the examination organ is allowed. If a candidate must travel from outside the examination center area, they can request additional practice time at another church or school, if it is deemed necessary by the exam coordinator. The coordinator shall make every effort to reserve practice times closest to the examination day for out-of-town candidates. Candidates are encouraged to keep their registrations as simple as possible to reduce the time required for setting combination pistons. Any questions concerning practice should be directed to the exam coordinator.
- Review guidelines for use of digital media during the playing exam:
 - If a performance is from a tablet or other digital device using electronically/digitally stored and accessed scores, the scanned copy must be a legally owned or downloaded copy, which includes the following possible scenarios:
 - ✓ A scan made from the candidate's own legally owned physical paper score.
 - ✓ A digital score purchased by the candidate from a publisher.
 - ✓ A downloaded IMSLP score from the specifically approved list of IMSLP scores in the Certification requirements.
 - ✓ The scanned copy used for the exam cannot be another person's scanned copy. It must be the candidate's legally owned copy.

1+ week before Exam Day:

CO

- Receive a packet from National Headquarters (either via email or postal mail) containing the examinations and a coded list of candidates.
 - Please open the packet immediately and make certain that each examination bears the correct candidate code number.
 - Notify Headquarters right away if there are any errors or omissions.
- Obtain physical copies of this Manual of Procedure and current exam requirements to use as reference during the exam. Distribute additional copies to the proctor.
- Make certain that the instrument(s) to be used will be in good condition on the day of the examination.
- Contact the chapter treasurer and request checks to be issued to the exam coordinator and proctor before exam day. It is also acceptable to mail the checks immediately after exam day. National Headquarters will reimburse the chapter later.

P

- Meet with the exam coordinator to receive copies of the exam and a PDF copy of the hymns chosen from the Examination Hymn Booklet. The proctor must observe the strictest secrecy and divulge the contents of the examinations to no one.

Exam Day:

CO

- At least 45 minutes prior to the exam, verify that the waiting room is ready, the organ is ready for the examination, and the recording equipment is in working order.
- If not serving as a proctor, the coordinator shall nonetheless be available to assist with the resolution of any problems that may arise in the administration of the examination(s).

P

- Arrive at least 45 minutes early to confirm that the organ is ready for the exam, the recording equipment is prepared, and the waiting room is open and ready for the candidate(s).
- Verify that the examination room (where written test occurs) and the preparation room (where the candidate goes prior to the playing exam) is stocked with sharpened pencils, plain paper, lined paper, and manuscript paper. A keyboard of any kind is not allowed in either the preparation or the examination room.
- 30 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the preparation room and give them a copy of their exam, including the sight-reading test. When the

preparation period has ended, escort the candidate to the waiting room and return to the preparation room to meet the next candidate (if applicable).

- 5 minutes before the scheduled start time of the exam, escort the candidate to the organ. Verify the order of the prepared pieces with the candidate to allow adequate time for the proctor to alter the script, if necessary.
- Verify that the candidate's cell phone is turned off prior to the start of the exam. Preferably, their cell phone should be turned off AND left with the proctor for the entirety of the exam.
- Bring a metronome for the playing exam to verify tempi with the candidate. Turn pages for the candidate during the exam, if requested to do so, but do not assist the candidate with registration changes. No other page turner shall be allowed into the examination.

CA

- Arrive at the exam site at least 35 minutes prior to your exam. Preparation time will begin 30 minutes before the exam is scheduled. If applicable, avoid contact with other examinees, regardless of whether they have already taken the examination. The candidate is not allowed to bring any materials with them, other than the repertoire pieces for the specified exam, and (if applicable) any prepared hymns, anthems, or accompaniments. Begin playing on time and play the parts of the examination as they are announced by the proctor and in the order specified in the certification requirements.

Immediately after Exam Day (submitting the exam):

CO

- Submit the candidates' examination paperwork and upload their recording (in the preferred format) to the Certification Program office at AGO National Headquarters (<mailto:exams@agohq.org>). The materials must be sent within 5 days of the exam to avoid delays in the grading process.
- Submit reimbursement request to National Headquarters regarding expenses incurred. Reimbursement checks will be mailed directly to the treasurer of the chapter. (Checks will not be made payable to individuals). The Guild will not pay any fee for the use of the church. The reimbursement form is due no later than 30 days after the exam.

1-2 Months after Exam Day:

CA

- Receive notification of the exam results by email within 1-2 months of the receipt of the examination materials. A mailed letter will follow and will include the candidate's averaged scores, paperwork, and the examiners' comments.
- Upon completion of all sections, successful candidates will receive their certificates directly from National Headquarters. Information about successful candidates, including photos and biographies, will be published in the October edition of The American Organist magazine.

- ❑ Successful candidates are entitled and encouraged to use the letters SPC, ChM, CAGO, AAGO, or FAGO after their name.
- ❑ Address questions concerning the grading of the exam to the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification (exams@agohq.org).



- ❑ If applicable, work with the dean of the local chapter to devise appropriate means of publicizing the achievement of successful candidates (if applicable). Recognition in the chapter’s marketing materials and at chapter meetings is encouraged.

AAGO Playing Exam Procedures

The purpose of the practical section of the Associateship examination is to evaluate the candidate’s competence in performing pieces of moderate difficulty which are representative of several contrasting styles, and to bring together theoretical knowledge and practical keyboard skills in performing, without prior preparation, several tests covering a wide range of competencies.

*Candidates may choose the order in which they would like to complete each section. They must notify the exam coordinator and/or the proctor prior to the exam so they can accommodate any logistical changes that need to be made prior to the exam. When a candidate is taking BOTH sections, there are only two options for the order of sections:

Option 1: Preparation Time
 A-1 (Repertoire)
 A-2 through A-7 (Keyboard Skills)

OR,

Option 2: Preparation Time
 A-2 through A-7 (Keyboard Skills)
 A-1 (Repertoire)

**The proctor must have a metronome in their possession prior to the start of the exam to confirm tempi with the candidate.*

A 1: Prepared Pieces



Before the candidate begins playing, confirm the order in which they are playing their prepared pieces, then announce each prepared piece before the candidate begins.

CA

Play through all repertoire pieces in their entirety, with a brief interval (no more than five minutes) between each piece. The proctor may turn pages but cannot assist with registration changes.

A 2: Sight Reading

CA

Place the examination booklet on the music rack and begin playing. Candidates are expected to play the example with a high level of note accuracy (including pedaling), steady consistent tempo, accurate articulation, and no significant hesitation or stopping. Candidates must play the excerpt within the given tempo range. The candidate is entitled to verify the metronome marking with the proctor.

P

Signal the candidate to begin playing when they are ready. Have a metronome ready to confirm the given tempo with the candidate if they request it.

A 3: Transposition

P

Signal the candidate to begin playing when they are ready. Have a metronome ready to confirm the given tempo with the candidate if they request it. If the candidate chooses not to play the transposition in the original key first, make an announcement before the candidate begins playing. Verify that the candidate is playing the required transpositions, and if the candidate does not play them in the specified keys, the proctor shall communicate that fact by an announcement at the end of the recording and by a written memo to accompany the recording when it is emailed to National Headquarters for evaluation.

CA

The candidate is permitted to play the excerpt in the original key first if they wish to do so. Then, immediately play the two transpositions indicated on the exam, keeping a steady tempo throughout. The candidate is expected to play the excerpt within the given tempo range.

A 4: Figured Bass

CA

Play the figured bass example in a steady rhythm within the given tempo range. Since no melody is given, the candidate is expected to achieve reasonably good voice-leading in the chords.

A 5: Bass/Melody Harmonization



Confirm with the candidate which of the three options the candidate has chosen to harmonize. Then, announce the candidate's choice before they begin playing.

A 6: Hymn



Play a prepared introduction to the hymn, as well as three stanzas in contrasting styles. The alternate harmonization may be originally composed or from published repertoire. Soloing out the melody for one of the stanzas is desired, but not required.



Announce which three stanzas the candidate has selected before they begin playing.

A 7: Improvisation



The candidate will first play the theme they have chosen, then begin their improvisation.



Dismiss the candidate at the conclusion of the exam. If applicable, collect the mark sheets and comment sheets from the examiners and give all paperwork to the exam coordinator to scan and email to National Headquarters.

A8: Analysis

A9: Fugue

A10: Ear Tests

A11: Aural Perception

A12: Composition



The candidate will continue and bring to a conclusion a passage of organ music. The resulting composition should be idiomatic for organ and remain complementary in style. Approximate length will be specified. Solid command of the tools of composition will be expected, including but not limited to harmonic language and consistency; at least 16 measures; idiomatic writing for the instrument; specify registration and any changes, including manual changes; and proper voice leading.

FAGO Playing Exam Procedures

The purpose of the practical section of the Fellowship examination is to evaluate the candidate's competence in performing pieces of an advanced level of difficulty in several contrasting styles, and to perform without prior preparation several keyboard tests representing skills that are different from, or more difficult than, those required for the Associateship.

*Candidates may choose the order in which they would like to complete each section. They must notify the exam coordinator and/or the proctor prior to the exam so they can accommodate any logistical changes that need to be made prior to the exam. When a candidate is taking BOTH sections, there are only two options for the order of sections:

Option 1: Preparation Time
F-1 (Repertoire)
F-2 through F-7 (Keyboard Skills)

OR,

Option 2: Preparation Time
F-2 through F-7 (Keyboard Skills)
F-1 (Repertoire)

**The proctor must have a metronome in their possession prior to the start of the exam to confirm tempi with the candidate.*

F 1: Prepared Pieces



Before the candidate begins playing, confirm the order in which they are playing their prepared pieces, then announce each prepared piece before the candidate begins.



Play through all repertoire pieces in their entirety, with a brief interval (no more than five minutes) between each piece. The proctor may turn pages but cannot assist with registration changes.

F 2: Sight Reading



Registration and proper observance of dynamics are essential for the success and evaluation of this item.

F 3: Clef Reading



Candidates are expected to play the example with a high level of note accuracy (including pedaling), steady consistent tempo, accurate articulation, and no significant hesitation or stopping. Candidates must play the excerpt within the given tempo range. The candidate is entitled to verify the metronome marking with the proctor.

F 4: Piano Adaptation



Arrange the given piano accompaniment by sight in a manner that is as idiomatic for the organ as possible, paying particular attention to registration and proper observance of dynamics. An imaginative registration is preferred.

F 5: Transposition



The candidate must play the two transpositions indicated on the exam, without pausing between the transpositions, and keeping a steady tempo throughout. They are NOT permitted to play the excerpt in the original key first.



Verify that the candidate is playing the required transpositions, and if the candidate does not play them in the specified keys, the proctor shall communicate that fact by an announcement at the end of the recording and by a written memo to accompany the recording when it is emailed to National Headquarters for evaluation.

F 6: Improvisation



Dismiss the candidate at the conclusion of the exam. If applicable, collect the mark sheets and comment sheets from the examiners and give all paperwork to the exam coordinator to scan and email to National Headquarters.

AAGO/FAGO Exam Day Schedule

Exam Day #1 (Morning) – Paperwork

P

Arrive 30 minutes in advance of the exam to confirm the examination room is open, the tables or desks are spaced apart (when multiple candidates are present), and the room is well-stocked with adequate pencils, plain paper, ruled paper, and manuscript paper for the candidate(s). The candidates are not permitted to use a keyboard instrument in the completion of the paperwork. At the end of either 3 hours (AAGO) or 3.5 hours (FAGO), collect the exam from the candidate(s), as well as any accompanying worksheets or scratch paper.

Exam Day #2 (Morning) – Paperwork

P

Check the examination room 30 minutes in advance of the exam, just as the day before.

Begin with the pre-recorded ear tests provided by National Headquarters.

Allow 3 minutes (AAGO) or 5 minutes (FAGO) after the last playing for the candidate to finish their dictation.

At the end of either 3 hours (AAGO) or 3.5 hours (FAGO), collect the exam from the candidate(s), as well as any accompanying worksheets or scratch paper.

Exam Day #1 or #2 (Afternoon) – Playing

P

Escort the candidate to the preparation room and notify them when the 20-minute preparation period has concluded.

5 minutes before the exam, escort the candidate from the waiting room to the organ.

Allow the candidate 5 minutes of preparation once they are seated at the organ.

E

If applicable – The examiners may be seated together, but they should arrive at and record marks independently of one another. Conversation during the exam should be limited to matters of procedure, not assessment.