

## CHAPTER 11 Qualifying For ASE/NATEF Certification

### A. History And Purpose

The purpose of the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) is to improve automotive technician education. NATEF evaluates automotive training programs at secondary and post-secondary schools for certification by the National Institute For Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).



Development of the certification program began in 1978. The American Vocational Association conducted a study to determine improvements needed in automotive technician training programs. By 1982, the study had resulted in a program evaluation guide, a task list, and a tool and equipment list.

The responsibility for further development and implementation of the evaluation program was turned over to ASE. The Automotive Service Association then donated its National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) to ASE to fund the evaluation program.

In 1989, NATEF began evaluation of collision repair programs. By 1998, 203 collision repair training programs had been certified. About 297 others have begun the evaluation process and 14 programs were involved with the on-site evaluation process. Of the 203 certified programs, 41 have been through the recertification process. This means that they had been certified for longer than five years, requiring renewal by recertification.

## B. Value Of Participating

NATEF evaluation and ASE certification can:

- allow a program to be eligible for scholarship funds and equipment and vehicle donations, which may be limited to certified programs.
- help a training program identify areas needing improvement.
- result in positive publicity for the program on a local, state or national basis.
- create more interaction between the industry and the program.
- result in increased school administration awareness and support of the program.
- be used as a selling point in student recruiting and placement.
- strengthen and motivate the Advisory Committee.
- increase instructor and staff motivation and morale.

## C. The Certification Process

Any secondary, post-secondary, technical institution, or community college program can apply for certification.

ASE/NATEF examines the structure and resources of the training program. It evaluates them based on nationally-accepted standards of quality in the following areas:

- Purpose
- Finances
- Instructors
- Equipment
- Facilities
- Administration
- Learning resources
- Student services
- Cooperative work agreements
- Instructional staff

A collision repair training program may apply for certification in:

- Painting and Refinishing.
- Structural Analysis and Damage Repair.
- Non-Structural Analysis and Damage Repair.
- Mechanical and Electrical Components.
- Plastics and Adhesives.

It is important to note that programs have three different certification options. A program may apply for certification in:

- Painting and Refinishing only.
- Structural Analysis and Damage Repair and any two other categories from the above list.
- all five categories in the above list.

The evaluation process has two steps: a self-evaluation and an on-site team evaluation.

The self-evaluation is similar to the process used when applying for regional or national accreditation. ASE/NATEF supplies the school with a self-evaluation packet. The packet describes all certification requirements and procedures.

After reviewing the self-evaluation, ASE/NATEF determines whether the program qualifies for on-site team evaluation. The 2-day visit by the on-site evaluation team involves review of the self-evaluation. The team also evaluates the program based on nationally-accepted standards of quality in the following areas:

- Equipment
- Curriculum
- Safety features
- Professionalism
- Effectiveness of instructional system
- Classroom facilities
- Staff credentials
- Cleanliness
- Job placement program

A program that does not meet the minimum requirements is notified of recommended improvements. A program that is recommended by NATEF based on this evaluation, will be certified by ASE.

Certified programs receive:

- a complete evaluation report.
- a promotional packet that helps the program publicize the certification.
- a plaque and wall sign indicating the areas in which the program is certified.
- the right to issue graduating students a certificate indicating that they have graduated from an ASE/NATEF-certified program.

## D. Time And Costs Involved

In 1998, self-evaluation materials were available from ASE/NATEF for \$60. If approved for on-site team review, the cost is approximately \$620. This fee will vary based on travel and accommodation expenses of the review team.

Recertification, which requires a 1-day on-site evaluation, is required every 5 years. Recertification costs approximately \$445 including \$50 for the recertification manual.

Completion of the self-evaluation and preparation for the on-site evaluation can require as much as 400 hours of instructor time. It generally takes a program about 18 months from the time it begins self-evaluation to complete the certification process.

## E. Tips For Earning Certification

The self-evaluation and certification process can be intimidating. Most programs can earn certification without significant purchases or changes. The keys are preparation and organization.

School administration support is critical. Instructors should be given adequate time without teaching responsibilities to prepare for the evaluation.

Work with the Advisory Committee and other industry groups to demonstrate to administrators the value and importance of certification. Communicate to administrators that:

- the Industry believes in and supports the certification program.
- ASE/NATEF certification is a prestigious honor earned only by high-quality training programs.
- the program is qualified to earn certification.
- certified programs have distinct advantages in recruiting and placing students, and in obtaining donations of equipment, vehicles and supplies.

When preparing for evaluation, instructors should focus on documentation of curriculum. Programs rarely fail ASE/NATEF certification evaluations because of lack of equipment. Evaluators must clearly see that the curriculum includes 80 percent of the required task list items. The ASE/NATEF Task List is reproduced starting on page 17-2. The I-CAR Education Foundation's ADVANCE-TECH curriculum, for example, meets ASE/NATEF requirements.

Instructors must also remember that ASE/NATEF evaluation team members are often volunteering their time. The team must review a lot of information in a limited amount of time. Make sure all required documentation is clear and accessible.

Information on certified programs is also available through ASE/NATEF headquarters. You can contact these certified programs for information and ideas on completing the certification process. If a school's automotive service (mechanical) program is ASE/NATEF-certified, the instructors and others involved in the program can be an excellent source of help in preparing the collision repair program for the certification process.

For more information on ASE/NATEF certification, contact the ASE/NATEF headquarters. The address and phone number are on page 17-24.