

# American College of Healthcare Executives

## Strengthening the Value of Fellowship: A Learning Community of Peers

Effective Jan. 1, 2012

### Changes in FACHE® Continuing Education Requirements: Q&A

Effective Jan. 1, 2012, the terminology and requirements associated with earning and recertifying the FACHE credential changed to address new standards for participation in face-to-face education programs. In addition, effective Jan. 1, 2014, the total number of continuing education credits required for advancement and recertification will change. The following answers questions related to these changes.

#### **1. What are the changes in the terminology for continuing education credit?**

The ACHE Board of Governors approved changes to the terminology used to describe ACHE continuing education credit, formerly termed “Category I (ACHE education) credit” and “Category II (non-ACHE) education credit.” The following language describes the required credits:

- **“Healthcare Management Continuing Education credit”** — the credit in total that is required for Fellow advancement and recertification.
- **“ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits”** — credit that is earned through ACHE-approved chapter panel discussions and programs offered by the national organization.
- **“ACHE Qualified Education credit”** — credit that is earned through programs offered by ACHE, chapters or other qualified sources, whether the programming is face-to-face or distance offerings (webinars, online seminars, self-study courses, etc.).

#### **2. What are the key changes in the continuing education requirements associated with the FACHE credential?**

Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, at least 12 hours of ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits are required for earning the FACHE credential and for recertifying. Examples include ACHE-approved, face-to-face panel discussions offered by chapters, ACHE seminars at cluster sessions, ACHE on-location programs and the Congress on Healthcare Leadership. In addition, beginning Jan. 1, 2014, the total number of continuing education credits required for originally becoming a Fellow and for recertifying will be identical under the new requirements: 36 credits earned during the previous three years.

### **3. Why is the continuing education requirement being changed?**

As part of a review of credentialing requirements, ACHE noted two trends: 1) an affiliate could become a Fellow or recertify without ever having experienced the actual fellowship that is associated with shared, face-to-face learning opportunities; and 2) ACHE's continuing education requirement for recertification was significantly lower than benchmarked organizations. Therefore, the ACHE Board of Governors began exploring revisions to the continuing education requirements associated with earning the FACHE credential and being recertified. The board's objective has been to ensure that the process maintains its rigor, reflecting current trends and the significance of the FACHE credential as an indicator of professional excellence and commitment.

### **4. How does the requirement for 12 face-to-face credits change the meaning of Category I credits that has been in place?**

Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, 12 hours of credits earned for advancement and recertification must be ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits. These include ACHE-approved, face-to-face panel discussions offered by chapters and programs offered by the national organization. Distance learning now falls under a different classification of continuing education credit—ACHE Qualified Education credit. However, unexpired ACHE distance learning credit earned before Dec. 31, 2011, is unaffected. The definitional change is not retroactive.

### **5. How do the new requirements change the meaning of Category II credits?**

ACHE Qualified Education credit refers to distance education offered by both ACHE and chapters, the ACHE self-study modules, other types of approved chapter education and all approved programming by other organizations (whether or not face-to-face). However, the changes do not affect any unexpired Category II credits that have been earned by Dec. 31, 2011. The definitional change is not retroactive.

### **6. Will chapters still be offering opportunities to earn Face-to-Face Education credit?**

Chapters have the opportunity to offer up to 12 ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits annually using ACHE-approved, face-to-face panel discussion templates. In addition, chapters can choose to offer the same content in more than one location within their territory having it only count once against their 12-credit cap.

### **7. Does the change in the definitions of Healthcare Management Continuing Education credit impact the ability of chapters to offer distance learning options?**

No, chapters can continue to offer distance learning opportunities. Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, all distance learning education, whether offered by ACHE or chapters, earns ACHE Qualified Education credit, which counts toward Fellow advancement or recertification.

**8. How do these changes affect the approval process for chapter offerings for ACHE Face-to-Face Education or ACHE Qualified Education credit?**

The approval process is unchanged in most respects. Chapters still need to apply to provide an approved panel discussion for ACHE Face-to-Face Education credit and are required to meet the same standards. Each iteration of unique programming requires approval, especially if the faculty, program title or other key elements change. Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, chapters are not able to obtain approval to offer ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits via distance learning modalities. Chapters are able to apply for pre-approval of ACHE Qualified Education offerings for these types of programs.

**9. When do the changes in continuing education requirements take place?**

Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, at least 12 hours of ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits are required for earning the FACHE credential and for recertifying. The change in the *number* of credits required will be effective Jan. 1, 2014. At that time, both new Fellows and those recertifying will need to fulfill the new requirements for both total hours and face-to-face credits.

An affiliate who completes all the requirements to earn certification as a Fellow prior to 2014 is under the old regulations for total continuing education credits (40 within the previous five years); however 12 of the 40 credits must be ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits. Candidates are able to apply all unexpired Category I credits as Face-to-Face Education credits, even if those courses were distance learning.

Fellows due to recertify prior to 2014 are under the old rules for total credits (24 within the previous three years); however, 12 of the 24 credits must be ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits. Candidates are able to apply all unexpired Category I credits as ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits, even if those courses were distance learning.

**10. Do the changes make it more difficult to earn and recertify my FACHE credential?**

While the changes help ensure appropriate rigor in obtaining and maintaining the status of board certification and reinforce the role of fellowship, earning the distinction of being a Fellow remains very doable. More than 90 percent of the credits awarded by ACHE in each of the last three years were for face-to-face sessions. Affiliates who received the FACHE credential in 2008, 2009 and 2010 earned an average of 28.6 Category I credits, far exceeding the required 12 credits. Those who recertified during the same period earned an

average of 25.9 Category I credits, exceeding even the combined total of Category I and Category II credits required.

**11. Does this make it more expensive to earn ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits?**

ACHE remains committed to making cost-effective, high-quality continuing education available to all affiliates. For example, chapters have the opportunity to offer up to 12 ACHE Face-to-Face Education credits annually using ACHE-approved, face-to-face panel discussion templates. This expands convenient, close-to-home access to affordable face-to-face education. For affiliates who choose to do so, their entire three-year, 12-credit face-to-face requirement for certification as a Fellow or recertification can be earned through chapters that offer **ACHE Face-to-Face Education** opportunities. In this way, affiliates are able to spend less time away from the office, reduce their travel costs and pay less for course fees than ever before.

**12. Does this mean that I will have fewer options for distance learning as part of my professional development?**

ACHE plans to continue to offer robust options for distance learning and self study. The changes in the certification requirements are not intended to reflect criticism of distance learning, but rather to ensure inclusion of the fellowship associated with group, face-to-face learning as one component of professional development. The new requirements recognize ACHE Qualified Education credits, whether offered directly by ACHE, by chapters or outside organizations, as important in achieving your continuing education requirements.

**13. How do the new ACHE Face-to-Face Education requirement affect affiliates in rural areas?**

Concern has been expressed that it may be more difficult for affiliates in more remote areas to obtain ACHE Face-to-Face Education credit than other affiliates. While travel issues no doubt exist for affiliates who work farther from the location of face-to-face programs, current experience indicates that is not a critical barrier. During the past three years distance learning and self study modalities represented just over 11 percent of the total educational hours taken by affiliates located in more rural settings. During that same period rural Fellows participating in ACHE education accumulated an average of 19.75 hours of credit of which only 2.5 hours were from distance learning and self-study modalities.

It is also important to remember that distance education, provided by ACHE or its chapters, remains viable for Fellow advancement and recertification as ACHE Qualified Education credit; only 12 of the required continuing education credits must be ACHE Face-to-Face education credits.

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