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Stenographic Court Reporter Certification, Education and Contests in the United States

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) was established in 1899. Among the many services the organization provides to stenographic court reporters is testing and certifying of minimum levels of skill and competency on a general basis and within specialty areas of the profession. Below is a brief overview of NCRA's certification and education processes, as well as other programs and NCRA offers to the court reporting community.

NCRA Stenographic Reporter Credentials

NCRA-certified professionals have empirically demonstrated their professional skills by meeting high minimum standards of competency in the field of court reporting.

Additionally, NCRA-certified professionals are required to maintain their certification(s) through a comprehensive continuing education program to ensure the highest level of professionalism is met on a consistent and ongoing basis.

NCRA's Continuing Education Program is nationally recognized and accredited by the American Council on Continuing Education and Training (ACCET).

RPR Certification

NCRA's entry-level certification, Registered Professional Reporter (RPR), requires candidates to undergo a rigorous, four-leg process that includes a speed & accuracy skills examination as well as a written knowledge test (WKT).

To learn more about the RPR, please visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/certification/Certification/rpr/default.htm>

Advanced Certifications

NCRA also offers several advanced and specialty reporting exams, including the Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR) exam, which are available for court reporters to develop and enhance their skills while building recognition for their achievements.

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Serving the court reporting and captioning professions

To learn more about our advanced certifications, please visit the certification section of NCRA's website:

<http://ncraonline.org/certification/Certification/default.htm>

Related Educational Programs

NCRA offers additional training programs, certifications, and credentials to provide NCRA members with diverse educational opportunities and experiences that align with narrow disciplines within the legal services arena:

- Certified Legal Video Specialist

<http://ncraonline.org/certification/Certification/clvs/default.htm>

- Realtime Systems Administrator

<http://ncraonline.org/certification/certificates/rsa>

- Trial Presentation Professional

<http://ncraonline.org/certification/certificates/tp/>

How NCRA Members Maintain Their Certification

An Ongoing Commitment: Members who have earned NCRA certification(s) are required to earn 3.0 continuing education units (30 hours) every three years to ensure that a consistent level of proficiency, technological advancement, and professionalism is maintained. NCRA equips members with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a world of ever-changing information and technology. Please visit the continuing education section of NCRA's website for more information on how reporters maintain their credentials. <http://www.ncraonline.org/certification/>

NCRA's certifications are developed, independently validated, and maintained on an ongoing basis through a nationally recognized certification entity, Professional Education Services (PES). In addition, NCRA strives to meet the highest credentialing standards, as established by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). NCRA is a proud member of the Institute of Credentialing Excellence (ICE), which advances credentialing through education, standards, research, and advocacy to ensure competence across professions and occupations.

Schools with Stenographic Programs that Participate in NCRA Education Programs

Certified Schools

The court reporter training programs offered at the institutions listed in the link below are committed to excellence in reporter education and have met the *General Requirements and Minimum Standards (GRMS)* established by the Council on Approved Student Education (CASE) of the National Court Reporters Association, earning the right to describe themselves as "NCRA

Certified.” In order to achieve and maintain certification, these programs agree to periodic review by CASE to verify their continued adherence to the *GRMS*. Each training program is identified as being certified for specific modes of delivery; on-site day, on-site evening, and online.

NCRA is not an accrediting agency; however, all NCRA-certified programs are accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Each institution’s transfer of credit policy is governed by the standards of the particular agency accrediting that institution.

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/Certified/>

Participating Programs

The court reporter training programs offered at the institutions listed in the link are NCRA-Participating programs. While not subject to the independent review by CASE, these programs have stated their commitment in providing stenographic reporter education by being able to access all NCRA resources, and may or may not be accredited by agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. (Accreditation status should be verified with the institution.)

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/Participating/>

Requirements & Standards

General Requirements and Minimum Standards (GRMS) for stenographic training programs are established by the Council on Approved Student Education (CASE), part of the National Court Reporters Association.

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/Requirements/>

The full text of the *GRMS* can be found at:

http://ncraonline.org/NR/rdonlyres/52B2F52B-7F43-4D7B-9988-BB6B761A4FDD/0/update_GRMS1.pdf

CASElines

CASElines is an NCRA newsletter specifically for court reporting educators.

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/CASElines/default.htm>

Up To Speed

Up To Speed is an NCRA newsletter specifically for students.

<http://ncraonline.org/Communities/Students/newsletter>

NCRA Steno Theory Clearinghouse

NCRA has shifted its role regarding steno theories from one of regulator to that of a "clearinghouse".

Information on commonly taught steno theories can be found at:

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/stenothory/>

Total Immersion Pilot Program

About the Program

In 2004, NCRA initiated an in-depth evaluation of its education and training programs through the Reporter Education Commission (REC). Research was conducted by professional researchers, educational consultants, the Council on Approved Student Education (CASE), and multiple member focus groups. Key findings led to the concept of a skills-only training program that would allow us to examine the relationship between the amount of time court reporting students invest in actual training on stenographic machines and their ultimate success in emerging as qualified, proficient court reporters. The pilot program "immerses" students in court reporting theory and machine writing entirely, rather than exposing students simultaneously to various additional coursework that are contained within traditional approaches to court reporting education. A task force was formed to create the program, a theory was written by the task force, and the course site for the online training program was developed. The task force is chaired by NCRA Past President Kathy DiLorenzo, RDR, CRR, CBC. Fifteen students were selected for the pilot, following a rigorous process of establishing qualifications, and the pilot began on March 16, 2009.

The Total Immersion Pilot Program was conducted under the auspices of the National Court Reporters Foundation.

Launching Total Immersion

The instructor for the pilot was Lynette Eggers, NCRA Assistant Director of Education. Lynette has an Associate's Degree in Court Reporting, a BS, MA, MBA, is a Certified Reporting Instructor, a Certified Program Evaluator, and the former president of Brown College of Court Reporting & Medical Transcription in Atlanta. Oversight for the pilot was provided by a task force of experienced stenographic educators, who assisted with instruction.

Total Immersion Conclusion

In September 2010, the Total Immersion Pilot Program came to an end. The Total Immersion task force has been meeting to analyze the performance and the results of the pilot. A determination as to how best to utilize any benefits is being reviewed. Following that analysis and review, a report to the membership will be generated.

For quarterly progress reports on the Total Immersion Pilot Program, please visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/totalimmersion/>

NCRA Reporter Education Commission

From 2004-05, NCRA's Reporter Education Commission was charged with identifying how NCRA could get greater numbers of qualified students into reporter training programs and more students out into the workforce in a more deliberate fashion.

The Commission interviewed and surveyed instructors, school owners, court administrators, court reporting firm owners, current and former students, and members for ideas about how to improve the reporter education system. The Commission identified several dozen activities, some large and some small, to undertake. Some of the major initiatives already in development include:

- Creating a best practices clearinghouse for instructors and school owners and administrators
- Expanding NCRA's role in student recruitment
- Building a stronger relationship with school owners and administrators
- Enhancing professional development opportunities for educators
- Creating an online national dictation database and interactive learning system
- Improving the current approval process for reporting programs
- Serving as the primary resource on steno theory

NCRA has concentrated on developing educational standards that are essential to ensuring the development of qualified reporters, standards that cannot be compromised in expediting students' emergence from court reporting programs. To provide greater value to training programs, NCRA is expanding its focus by giving schools, students, and instructors more tools and resources to help them improve and succeed.

NCRA has made a long-term commitment to strengthening the reporter education system, using the recommendations and findings of the Reporter Education Commission as its guide.

NCRA has expanded its education staff and the recommendations of the Reporters Education Commission are now institutionalized and permanent functions of NCRA.

The Commission's final report can be found at:

http://www.ncraonline.org/NR/rdonlyres/9370C11D-8D57-41CE-BB88-3D94439AD3AC/0/rec_report.pdf

Career Information

NCRA also provides extensive information and support for individuals considering stenographic court reporting as a career.

Please visit:

<http://www.bestfuture.com/>

National Speed Competition

The first National Speed Contest was held in 1909, and the pursuit of excellence embodied by the Speed Contest has continued for more than 100 years. Contestants write and transcribe three five-minute dictations: a 220 word-per-minute literary content, a 230 word-per-minute legal opinion contest, and a 280 word-per-minute testimony (two-voice) contest.

To qualify in each leg of the competition, an accuracy rate of 95% or better is required.

The best combined score wins the championship with recognition also provided to individuals that win each of the three contests within the overall Speed Contest.

For more information on the next NCRA National Speed Contest, please visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/Meetings/Annual/Competitions/>

To view the Speed Contest rules, visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/Meetings/Speed/rules.htm>

National Realtime Competition

The Realtime Competition takes place each year at the NCRA Annual Convention and Exhibition.

In addition to the RPR credential, competitors must hold the RMR, RDR, or one of NCRA's realtime certifications (CCR, CCP, CBC) to enter the competition.

The competition consists of two five-minute dictations: straight matter at 200 words per minute and two-voice testimony at 225 words per minute. Contestants will produce ASCII files and print out transcripts for grading prior to leaving the contest room. Contestants qualify in each leg with an accuracy rate of 95% or better, and the best combined score among those qualifying in both parts wins the championship.

For more information on the NCRA Realtime Competition, visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/Meetings/Annual/Competitions/>

To view the Realtime Competition rules, please visit:

<http://ncraonline.org/Meetings/Realtime/realtime+rules+2006.htm>