

Academy of Certified Archivists
Certified Archivist (CA) Credential Administration Policy

Approved by the ACA Board of Regents, July 2026

Amended August 7, 2026

1. Purpose

This policy establishes clear and consistent standards for the administration of the Certified Archivist (CA) credential, including examination, certification, membership requirements, recertification, lapses, suspension, reinstatement, and expiration. The policy is intended to ensure transparency, fairness, and effective administration by ACA volunteers and management, and to provide clear expectations for applicants, certificants, and members.

2. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following terms shall have the meanings set forth below.

These terms shall be used consistently in all ACA communications.

2.1 Certified Archivist (CA)

An individual who has passed the CA Examination (or were admitted before the exam requirement) and holds an Active CA credential, subject to ongoing compliance with ACA certification maintenance and recertification requirements.

2.2 CA Credential

The Certified Archivist (CA) credential is the professional certification awarded upon successful completion of the CA Examination and maintained through ongoing compliance with ACA requirements.

The CA credential operates on an annual July 1 - June 30 administrative cycle, aligned with ACA membership.

The CA credential is valid for a five-year recertification cycle. Credential validity refers to the period during which certification remains in force and authorized for use and is distinct from credential status.

Credential status may be Active, Lapsed, Suspended, or Expired. A credential may remain valid while in Lapsed or Suspended status and ceases to be valid only when it becomes Expired due to failure to recertify within the required five-year period.

2.3 ACA Membership

An annual requirement for all individuals holding an active CA credential.

Membership term: July 1 - June 30

Annual dues: as established by the ACA Board

ACA membership is required to maintain an Active CA credential and may not exist independently of certification, except as otherwise provided in Section 10.1.

2.4 Membership Renewal

The annual payment of ACA membership dues to maintain good standing as a Certified Archivist.

Membership renewal does not extend, replace, or substitute for recertification.

2.5 Recertification

The process by which a Certified Archivist maintains credential validity by completing recertification within each five-year cycle by either:

- Accruing 60 Continuing Education Credits (CECs) or
- Retaking and passing the CA Examination.

2.6 Lapsed Status

A temporary credential status indicating administrative noncompliance due to failure to renew membership within the standard renewal window.

2.7 Suspended Status

A credential status indicating extended noncompliance. A suspended credential is inactive and may not be used professionally.

2.8 Expired Credential

A credential that has reached the end of its five-year recertification cycle without successful completion of recertification.

An expired credential is no longer valid.

3. Pathway to Initial Certification

3.1 Application and Examination

To pursue the CA credential, an individual must, in accordance with requirements established by the ACA Board:

- Submit an application to take the CA Examination
- Pay a non-refundable examination fee
- Sit for the CA Examination at the designated time and place
- Achieve a passing score

3.2 Initial Certification

Passing the CA Examination confers eligibility for the CA credential but does not, by itself, result in active Certified Archivist status.

3.3 Initial Membership Requirement

Individuals who pass the CA Examination must pay ACA membership dues by September 30 following receipt of notice of passing the examination.

Failure to pay membership dues by this deadline will result in the CA credential being placed in Lapsed status.

4. Ongoing Requirements for Certified Archivists

4.1 Annual Membership

All Certified Archivists must maintain continuous ACA membership to hold an Active CA credential.

Annual ACA membership dues are required to maintain an Active CA credential and remain in good standing. Recertification is required separately to renew the credential at the conclusion of each five-year certification cycle.

4.2 Five-Year Recertification Cycle

Each CA credential is valid for five years.

Certified Archivists must complete recertification by the end of the five-year recertification cycle.

Failure to recertify by the end of the five-year recertification cycle results in Expired credential status.

All five-year recertification cycles are aligned to the ACA administrative year. A certification cycle begins on July 1 and concludes on June 30 five years thereafter,

regardless of the date on which certification, recertification, or reinstatement is granted.

5. Membership Renewal and Lapsed Status

5.1 Active Renewal Window

ACA membership renewals open July 1.

Certified Archivists have 90 days (July 1 - September 30) to renew membership.

During this period, the CA credential remains Active.

5.2 Lapsed Credential Status

If membership dues are not paid by September 30:

- Effective October 1, the CA credential enters Lapsed status
- The Lapsed period extends through December 31

A Lapsed credential:

- Remains technically valid
- May not be represented as “in good standing”
- Indicates administrative noncompliance rather than loss of certification
- May be fully restored by paying membership dues during the Lapsed period

6. Suspension and Reinstatement

6.1 Suspension

If membership dues remain unpaid as of January 1:

- The CA credential becomes Suspended

A Suspended credential:

- Is inactive
- May not be used professionally
- May not be publicly represented as active
- Does not pause or extend the five-year recertification cycle

6.2 Reinstatement (January 1 – June 30)

From January 1 through June 30 immediately following the October–December Lapsed period, a Suspended Certified Archivist may return to good standing by:

- Paying current ACA membership dues, and
- Paying a reinstatement fee as established by the ACA Board

Upon completion, the credential is restored to Active status, with no change to the original recertification deadline.

7. Extended Noncompliance Beyond June 30

If a CA credential remains Suspended beyond June 30 immediately following the January-June reinstatement period (representing an entire membership year of noncompliance), the individual is no longer eligible for administrative reinstatement.

7.1 Loss of Standard Reinstatement Eligibility

If a CA does not reinstate by June 30 following suspension:

- The individual is no longer eligible for reinstatement through payment of dues and fees alone
- The CA credential remains Suspended and may not be reactivated administratively

Beginning July 1, individuals whose credentials remain Suspended must pursue return to certification in accordance with Section 8. The pathway available under Section 8 depends on whether recertification requirements for the applicable five-year cycle were satisfied.

7.2 Expired Credentials and Long-Term Suspension

A CA credential becomes Expired when the five-year recertification period ends without successful completion of recertification.

Individuals with Expired credentials, or whose credentials have remained Suspended through an entire membership year (July 1 – June 30), may not:

- Use the CA designation
- Represent themselves as Certified Archivists
- Renew ACA membership
- Submit a recertification petition

Individuals in these circumstances must pursue return to certification in accordance with Section 8.

8. Return to Certification

Return to certification under this section is governed by the following principle. Membership dues, reinstatement fees, penalties, and administrative fees resolve deficiencies in membership standing only. No payment of dues, fees, or penalties shall satisfy, waive, substitute for, or shorten the recertification requirements set forth in Section 2.5. Recertification is satisfied only by accruing sixty (60) Continuing Education Credits within the applicable five-year cycle or by retaking and passing the CA Examination.

8.1 Recertification Appeals (Limited Use)

ACA may consider off-cycle recertification appeals from individuals who:

- Previously held an Active CA credential; and
- Missed a recertification or compliance deadline and whose credential is either not Expired or has been Expired for less than twelve (12) months, and
- Can demonstrate that the missed deadline resulted from documented hardship, administrative error, or comparable circumstance; and
- Submit a petition prior to an extended lapse in compliance.

Recertification appeals are discretionary, require documentation of professional archival activity, and are not guaranteed approval.

Approval of an appeal satisfies recertification requirements for the applicable certification cycle but does not waive or replace ongoing membership or certification maintenance obligations.

8.2 Return Following Long-Term Suspension Where Recertification Was Satisfied

This section applies to an individual whose credential remained Suspended through an entire membership year and who either:

- Completed recertification for the applicable five-year cycle prior to its conclusion; or
- Remains within a five-year cycle that has not yet concluded.

Such an individual may seek return to Active status by submitting a Reinstatement Application and paying:

- All outstanding ACA membership dues accrued during the period of Lapsed and Suspended status; and
- A reinstatement fee as established by the ACA Board.

Upon approval of the Reinstatement Application and payment in full:

- Certification shall be restored to Active status; and
- The individual's existing five-year recertification cycle and recertification deadline shall resume without extension.

No new certification cycle is granted under this section.

8.3 Return Following Expiration or Unmet Recertification

This section applies to an individual whose credential is Expired, or whose credential remained Suspended through an entire membership year and whose five-year recertification cycle concluded without recertification having been completed.

Return to certification requires one of the following:

(a) Re-Examination Pathway. The individual may apply for certification as a new candidate and successfully complete the CA Examination in accordance with all eligibility requirements, application procedures, and fees in effect at the time of application. Upon certification, a new five-year certification cycle begins in accordance with Section 4.2, commencing July 1 of the membership year in which certification takes effect.

(b) Documented Credit Pathway. Where an individual can document that sixty (60) or more qualifying Continuing Education Credits were in fact earned within the applicable five-year cycle but were not submitted, or could not be submitted because membership status barred petition under Section 7.2, the individual may submit a Reinstatement Application accompanied by:

- Full documentation of all credits claimed, subject to review by the Regent for Certification Maintenance;
- All outstanding ACA membership dues accrued during the period of Lapsed, Suspended, and Expired status; and

- A reinstatement fee as established by the ACA Board.

Approval under 8.3(b) is discretionary and is not guaranteed. Upon approval, certification is restored to Active status and a new five-year certification cycle begins in accordance with Section 4.2, commencing July 1 of the membership year in which restoration occurs.

Continuing Education Credits earned on or after the July 1 commencing the new cycle may be applied toward that cycle, including credits earned prior to the date of restoration.

Payment of dues and fees, without satisfaction of subsection (a) or (b), shall not restore certification under this section.

The Academy reserves the right to establish reasonable documentation requirements, time limitations, or additional conditions governing reinstatement under the Documented Credit Pathway in order to preserve the integrity of the credential.

9. Recertification Credits

Recertification credits should be submitted on a rolling basis during the applicable five-year recertification cycle, in accordance with ACA's published recertification guidelines.

Credits are reviewed on a rolling basis.

Credits must be earned within the applicable five-year recertification cycle and do not carry over to future recertification cycles.

Credits earned within a five-year cycle that concluded without recertification do not carry forward into any subsequent cycle granted under Section 8.3.

Recertification credits earned during periods in which a credential is classified as Lapsed or Suspended may be applied toward recertification for the applicable cycle; however, the CA credential remains inactive and may not be represented or used until reinstatement requirements have been satisfied.

Recertification does not replace the requirement to maintain annual ACA membership.

10. Eligibility for Membership

ACA membership is limited to individuals holding an Active CA credential, except as provided in Section 10.1 (Emeritus Membership).

Individuals with expired credentials or long-term suspended credentials are not eligible to renew membership.

Membership may not be maintained independently of certification.

10.1 Emeritus Membership

Emeritus membership status is reserved for Certified Archivists who are retired or otherwise no longer performing daily archival work and is subject to ongoing compliance with ACA requirements.

Emeritus membership does not confer or maintain an active Certified Archivist (CA) credential. Individuals holding emeritus membership may not represent themselves as active Certified Archivists but may use the CA Emeritus designation in accordance with ACA policy.

11. Communication and Notice

ACA will communicate membership renewal requirements, status changes, deadlines, and consequences to stakeholders throughout the year. Certified Archivists are responsible for maintaining current contact information and responding to communications in a timely manner.

Failure to act following repeated notice does not relieve a certificant of responsibility for compliance.

12. Administration and Authority

This policy is administered by ACA management under the authority of the ACA Board of Regents. Volunteers and committees shall apply this policy consistently and refer exceptional cases to the appropriate Regent or the Executive Committee.

13. Effective Date and Review

This policy becomes effective upon approval by the ACA Board and should be reviewed biannually to ensure clarity, fairness, and administrative effectiveness.

Amendments to Sections 4.2, 7.1, 8, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, and 9 were adopted by the ACA Board of Regents on August 7, 2026, and took effect upon adoption.