

# WQA Modular Education Program & Online Knowledge Base FAQs

## Q1. What is the Modular Education Program?

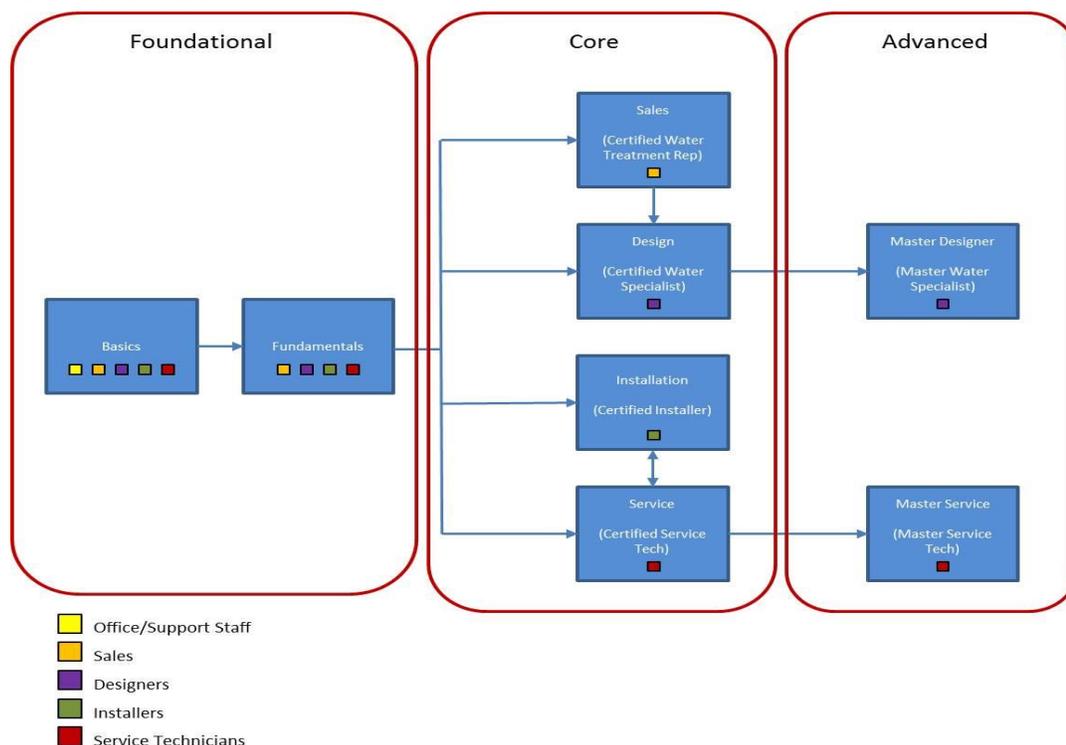
**A1.** The Modular Education Program is the new way WQA is delivering education on POU/POE water treatment. It provides step-wise pathways toward education on specific topics and toward WQA’s various professional certifications, with training that reflects every-day, on-the job scenarios and customer questions.

## Q2. Who is this program for?

**A2.** This program is for anyone involved in the POU/POE treatment market, from non-technical office staff to sales and marketing personnel, to installers and service technicians and system designers. Specific educational pathways address the learning needs of each job role, and provide the flexibility for building custom educational paths based on topics of interest to the learner.

## Q3. How is this program structured?

**A3.** The program is divided into 8 curricula. These are: Basics, Fundamentals, Installation, Service, Sales, System Design, Advanced-Design, and Advanced-Service. The graphic below illustrates the educational pathways and target audiences. The Basics curriculum is meant for non-technical staff such as receptionists and marketing personnel. The Fundamentals curriculum picks up from the Basics and addresses the topics common to sales, system design, installation, and service. Specific Core curricula serve as preparation for professional certification, and the advanced curricula lead to the two new Master certification titles: Master Water Specialist, and Master Service Technician.



#### **Q4. What do I get for completing this program?**

**A4.** A Certificate of Completion is offered with the completion of each badge. Certain sets of badges will be pre-requisites for taking WQA's certification exams. For example, someone wishing to become a Certified Water Specialist (CWS) will need to complete the Basics, Fundamentals, and System Design Modules. Someone wishing to become a Certified Installer (CI) would need to complete the Basics, Fundamentals, and Installation Modules.

#### **Q5. Do I still have to take an exam to get certified?**

**A5.** Yes. You must still pass the respective certification exams to achieve the CWS, CI, CSR, and CST titles.

#### **Q6. How does this program differ from WQA's previous education and professional certification study materials?**

**A6.** There are three main differences. First, the educational materials in the new program are presented as short, discreet courses that gradually build in technical difficulty to guide the learner from basic to more advanced concepts. Second, the content for both the courses and the background reading needed to complete them is delivered electronically, online. Finally, the courses consist of learning activities that simulate real-world problem solving so that the learner is able to immediately apply the education to his/her day-to-day job.

#### **Q7. I don't sell or service ion exchange water softeners. Does the Modular Education Program still apply to me?**

**A7.** Yes. The educational materials in this program address a broad range of POU/POE treatment technologies besides ion exchange - media filtration, reverse osmosis and other membrane filtration, UV disinfection, ozone disinfection, chlorine disinfection, and aeration. The materials also address a broad range of applications besides water softening – drinking water treatment for potability and aesthetics, stain prevention, pH adjustment, and corrosion prevention. WQA will continue to add courses on technologies, applications, and processes as needed. Learners and their employers have the flexibility to build their own curricula or choose from specific badges designed around a treatment technology or application.

#### **Q8. I don't plan to get certified. Does this program offer anything for me?**

**A8.** Yes. Because the courses are separated by topic and level of difficulty, anyone in the POU/POE water treatment industry can find just the training they need to help increase their level of competency and expertise.

#### **Q9. Why does the new program have experiential requirements and why do I have to complete them to earn a badge or to become eligible for certification?**

**A9.** The experiential learning activities fulfill two goals of the new program. The first goal is to insure that the educational program shortens the time necessary to bring a new employee up to competence in his/her job. This is best done through a combination of study and practice, which is what the combination of online learning and experiential activities provide.

The second goal is to improve the credibility of WQA certified personnel and badge-earners in the eyes of consumers, regulators, and the industry. A shortcoming of an exam-only certification and badge is that while it proves that someone can pass an exam, it doesn't prove that he/she can perform in the field. Completion of the

experiential requirements provides that proof. The on-line tracking capability of WQA's Learning Experience Manager provides a record of the progress a learner has made not only in the on-line courses, but also with the hands-on, field-based training.

### **Q10. What's involved in an experiential learning activity?**

**A10.** The activities will vary based on the particular capability being studied. One of the activities from the Basics curriculum involves compiling a list of frequently asked questions on water treatment and equipment the learner's company receives from its customers, and the short answers to those questions. A more advanced activity in the Installation curriculum is performing an installation in the field of a specific type of treatment technology.

### **Q11. How are the experiential activities graded?**

**A11.** Each learner is asked to designate a mentor, preferably within the learner's company. The mentor is responsible for evaluating the activity results and discussing them with the learner. Learners can designate different mentors as they proceed to other activities. Learners who cannot designate a mentor within their company or from their franchiser/manufacturer/dealer network will get assistance from WQA's Education Department in finding a mentor. Care will be taken to avoid potential competitive situations between the learner and mentor's companies.

### **Q12. How long does it take to complete the learning activities?**

**A12.** The exact time amount will depend on the experience level of the learner and the time available to complete the various activities. Most of the eLearning activities can be completed in 15 minutes, self-study activities may require an hour or several, and some others may need a few days. The experiential activities are intended to fit with the learner's on-the-job activities and to be completed as part of what already makes up the learner's work day.

### **Q13. I'm already certified. How will this new program affect me?**

**A13.** Many of the currently certified personnel will be grandfathered into the new program. As of April 2015 (North America; 2016 Global) certified professionals holding the titles of CWS-V and CWS-VI will be redesignated as Master Water Specialists, and professionals holding the titles of CWS-I, CWS-II, CWS-III and CWS-IV will be redesignated simply as Certified Water Specialists. All Certified Water Specialists will be able to work through the advanced curriculum of the new MEP program to achieve the Master Water Specialist title

Current Certified Installers (CI) will retain their title and may work through the MEP program to Certified Service Technician and from there to Master Service Technician. In addition, they may pursue through the MEP any other core certification title.

Current Sales Representatives (CSR) will be retitled as Certified Water-Treatment Representatives (CWR). They will be able to pursue any other core certification title through the MEP.



#### **Q14. I'm currently certified. Will this new program change how I get continuing education credits for recertification?**

**A14.** Not at this time. The annual education kits that the WQA currently provides for continuing education credits will still be available.

#### **Q15. What's the Online Knowledge Base (KB)?**

**A15.** The Knowledge Base is the searchable online repository of all of WQA's educational materials – text, audio, and video, and is similar to Wikipedia. Materials are organized as short Knowledge Objects that address a specific topic and include links to additional information. The Knowledge Base software supports keyword searches of Knowledge Object titles, tags, and text body. A taxonomy or hierarchy of material by topic is also available for browsing. Access to the Knowledge Base is included for anyone enrolled in the Modular Education Program and is included as part of the member benefits for WQA member companies.

#### **Q16. What is the Learning Experience Manager (LEM)?**

**A16.** The Learning Experience Manager (LEM) is an online progress tracking and course delivery system that allows learners to select curricula and courses, monitor their progress, upload the results of experiential learning activities, and report their progress to supervisors, regulatory personnel, and consumers.

#### **Q17. Which mobile platforms can be used to access the Learning Experience Manager (LEM), the Knowledge Base (KB), and the online courses?**

**A17.** All the software and courses can be viewed on Android and iOS operating systems. The online courses are most conveniently viewed via tablets, laptops, and desktop computers.

#### **Q18. What is the enrollment fee for the Modular Education Program?**

**A18.** MEP pricing is per learner/per certificate or per learning path. Full subscriptions are \$350\* and just \$150\* for currently certified professionals interested in adding another certification title.

\*WQA member price

#### **Q19. When will the Modular Education Program and Knowledge Base become available?**

**A19.** The roll-out of the new program will be step-wise. The Knowledge Base content and courses for Basics and Fundamentals are available now. The CWR and CI portions of the Core curriculum and Knowledge Base content supporting the certifications will be available in August 2014. The CWS curriculum will become available by the end of 2014 and the CST and Advanced curricula for the Master Water Specialist and Master Service Tech will be available in March 2015.