



Level III Course of Study & Requirements Planning for Level III

***Please ensure you are using a current copy of materials by downloading from the TMCEC website:
<https://www.tmcec.com/clerk-certification/level-iii/>.***

The Municipal Court Clerks Certification Program is intended to challenge court personnel in the area of professional development and continuous improvement. It consists of three (3) levels of competency.

The Level III portion of this program is essentially a self-study course, which requires the participant to read and comprehend a variety of books, excerpts and/or professional journals, and subsequently pass a high-level competency exam.

Upon achieving Level III certification, a clerk will receive an official certificate designating him or her as *Certified Municipal Court Clerk* (CMCC) and is then entitled to utilize the post nominal initials (designatory letters) of CMCC as accreditation in a resume, with their signature, name and title. Additionally (for clarification), upon achieving Levels I and II, clerks may also utilize the post nominal initials of CCCI and CCCII, accordingly.

The information in this packet was developed to provide certification participants with an overview of the steps required for this final level. It contains the following information:

- Overview of the Level III process & rules of participation;
- Recommended "Course of Study" & education requisites;
- Overview of court observations & journal requirements;
- Overview of journal grading & review process;
- Book List with provider and costs
- Level III book loan program information; (*Attachment A*);
- Book Loan Refund request form (*Attachment B*);
- Court Observation Verification Form (*Attachment C*);
- Level III Observation Journal Grading Rubric (*Attachment D*); and,
- Level III Certification Application (*Attachment E*)

If you have questions regarding the information in this packet, please contact TMCEC at 512.320.8274 or certification@tmcec.com.

Course of Study

A **course of study**, also called *core curriculum*, refers to a series of courses and other requirements that all participants are required to complete before they can apply and achieve the final designation of a *Certified Municipal Court Clerk*.

The general educational purpose of a course of study is to ensure that all participants take and complete course work that is considered to be academically and culturally essential. This course of study consists of components that teach participants the foundational knowledge and skills they will need for managing people and processes within a municipal court. This course of study for the Level III program is intended to be completed in less than a three (3) year period but has an exam expiration of five (5) years. The significance of this time frame is directly related to ensuring the professional journal has current and relative information within the document that would not cause the reader to fail the journal for inaccurate or unlawful practices.

The following is a list of the course work to be completed in chronological order:

Phase 1: Reading & Education (Target time for completion – 1 year)

1. Obtain the Level III books and begin the self-study and required reading;
2. Create an exam calendar based on your personal testing style;
3. Register for and pass each part of the Level III exam (each part expires on the 5th anniversary);
4. Register for and attend the Level III Assessment Clinic (no expiration date);
5. Register for and attend the Court Administrators Seminar (education hours expire on the 3rd anniversary); and
6. Complete 40 hours of approved education. Education hours used toward the 40-hour requirement must be within three years of the application date. At least 20 hours must be Core Education offered by TMCEC, TCCA, or TMCA. Hours from the required Court Administrators Seminar count toward the 40-hour requirement. Hours from the Level III Assessment Clinic also count if completed within the three-year period; however, completion of the Assessment Clinic itself does not expire. Any remaining required hours may be completed through Approved External Education. In any academic year, no more than eight (8) hours may be completed through approved on-demand Core Education.

Phase 2: Court Observation & Professional Journal (Target time for completion – 1 to 2 years)

1. Read the *Journal & Observation Planning Guide*;
2. Review the minimum standards & evaluation criteria on which your journal will be graded;
3. Create a list of courts to visit for observation within population requirements;
4. Create a personalized plan for your professional journal related to style & content (expires on 2nd anniversary);
5. Draft journal entry & notes;
6. Complete final edits; and
7. Submit the journal and the required attachments to TMCEC by email (*may take up to 45 days for results to be received; the participant may be asked to make corrections, improvements or other changes before passing*).

Once all Level III requirements are completed, compile and submit the application packet with required documentation.

MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM LEVEL III REQUIREMENTS

Partners & Sponsors

The Texas Court Clerks Association (TCCA) in cooperation with the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC), and Texas State University-San Marcos sponsor the Municipal Court Clerks Certification Program.

Prior Certification Required

To be eligible to participate in Level III of the Municipal Court Clerks Certification Program, participants must have already achieved Levels I and II of the Certification Program. Proof of certification in good standing for the annual maintenance hours (CEUs) must be provided during the application process.

Reading & Self-Study

Participants are required to read a variety of books, excerpts and/or professional journals. See <https://www.tmcec.com/clerk-certification/level-iii/> for a current list. The books are available online and for purchase from a variety of sources. Many titles may be found in local and university libraries. The estimated cost of a set of books is \$500 (new). A limited number of sets are available for loan from TMCEC or TCCA's Education Committee. TMCEC requires a \$100 deposit to participate in the book borrowing process. See *Attachment A* to request books from TMCEC or visit <https://www.tmcec.com/clerk-certification/level-iii/>. A refund request (*Attachment B*) must be made for the borrower's deposit to be returned.

Self-Study Techniques

To streamline the study process, each part of the exam has been assigned specific books from the required reading list. If the exam is taken in parts, all parts must be passed within five years of the first part passed. Study questions for each book are available on the TMCEC website: <https://www.tmcec.com/clerk-certification/level-iii/>.

Additionally, many participants recommend study partners or groups, which increase retention and facilitate discussion of the subject matter. Using the "Book Club" format is a valuable study tool. While participation in current review sessions is always recommended, TCCA has made recordings of past virtual book club meetings available on their website. However, please note these are for informational purposes ONLY and do NOT qualify for certification/education hours.

Mentor Program

Participation in the mentor program can be helpful. Mentors are assigned after attendance at the Level III Assessment Clinic each year. The program creates an opportunity to communicate with a current Level III clerk. For more information, please contact the TCCA Education Committee.

Self-Study & Required Reading

Exams

Clerk Certification Exams are offered through TMCEC on the first day of each TMCEC regional clerk seminar, the Court Administrator Seminar, the Juvenile Case Manager Seminar, and the Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference (MTSI) and on the last day of the Level III Assessment Clinic and New Clerks Seminars. Exams are also offered through TCCA at locations across the state at various times throughout the year and at the TCCA annual conference. Exams are no longer offered by individual appointments, but the schedule does provide an array of locations across the state for your convenience, many of which are in the Austin area. The Level III exam can be taken as a complete unit or it can be taken in three different parts – Part A, B, & C. Participants must pass all parts of the Level III exam covering the domains listed above based on self-study and required reading.

Level III Education Requirements

Level III applicants must complete 40 hours of approved education. Education hours used toward the 40-hour requirement must be within three years of the application date. At least 20 hours must be Core Education offered by TMCEC, TCCA, or TMCA. Any remaining required hours may be completed through Approved External Education. In any academic year, no more than eight (8) hours may be completed through approved on-demand Core Education.

The following programs are also specifically required for Level III certification:

Level III Assessment Clinic

Participants are required to successfully complete the 24-hour Level III Assessment Clinic. The Assessment Clinic emphasizes role-plays and simulations involving workplace problems, employee appraisals, conflict resolution, dealing with diversity, preparing a cost-benefit analysis, and working in teams. Participants should become familiar with the Level III books prior to attending the Level III Assessment Clinic.

Completion of the Level III Assessment Clinic does not expire. If completed within three years of the application date, the Assessment Clinic hours may also count toward the 40-hour education requirement. If completed more than three years before the application date, the participant does not need to attend the Assessment Clinic again, but those hours do not count toward the required 40 hours.

Court Administrators Seminar

Applicants must successfully complete a TMCEC 12-hour Court Administrators Seminar within three years of the application date. Because the Court Administrators Seminar must be current, its hours count toward the 40-hour education requirement.

Please visit the TMCEC website for registration information.

Court Observations

Participants are required to complete the court observation component within **two (2) years of the date of the first court observation**. The observation component consists of 40 hours of municipal court observation broken down by city population in the following way:

Required # Hours	Court Volume	Municipality Population
At least 4 hours	Low-volume courts	10,000 or less
At least 4 hours	Medium-volume courts	10,001 to 249,999
At least 4 hours	High-volume courts	250,000 or greater
28 additional hours	Any volume court(s)	Any of the above
40 Hours Total		

The following 12 courts are considered large courts for the purpose of this program. These courts are:

Arlington	Dallas	Houston
Plano	Austin	El Paso
Laredo	San Antonio	Corpus Christi
Fort Worth	Lubbock	Irving

Composition of Professional Journal

Participants must compose and submit a professional journal to TMCEC with the original court observation verification form. See *Attachment C* for specific information on this requirement. Also, to perfect this component, you must use the “**Court Observation & Professional Journal Planning Guide.**” This guide has been designed to walk participants through the journal creation process. It includes multiple rules, tools, and suggested practices to ensure you understand the expectation of the reviewers. Additionally, it includes a breakdown of the grading rubric and a list of mastery components each journal will be scored against. To access it, visit <https://www.tmcec.com/clerk-certification/level-iii/>.

Submittal of Academic Journal

Journals are confidential and copies are not retained by TMCEC. Each participant must keep a copy for their records. Journals should be submitted electronically to certification@tmcec.com.

Submittal must include three attachments: one copy of the journal (without any identifying information), one cover page (including all applicable identifying information) and a “Court Observation Verification Form.” The TMCEC recipient will electronically distribute journal copies to all graders. The review and grading process may take up to 45 days. Journals that have not been submitted in accordance with the rules will not be reviewed and notice will be sent to the participant in writing. Journals must achieve an average score of 70% or higher to pass (cumulative average between all graders).

Journal Failing Results

In the event of a score below 70%, participants will be notified in writing of the areas within the grading criteria that need improvement. Second submittals may be completed and returned at any time, keeping in mind the importance of the expiration dates of the observation.

Journal Passing Results Notification

Participants will receive notice in writing by email of the passing results from the journal submittal. This letter is a required document for the Level III application process. It must be retained in your personal records.

Application for Level III

After completing all of the requirements for Level III, the participant must submit an application along with proper documentation of successful completion of all the requirements. See *Attachment F* for application. Upon achieving Level III, participant will receive an official certificate designating him or her as Certified Municipal Court Clerk (CMCC) and is then entitled to utilize the post nominal initials (designatory letters) of “CMCC” as accreditation in a resume, accompanied by their signature, name and title.

Annual Maintenance

During each academic year from September 1 through August 31, a Level III certified clerk must complete a minimum of **20 hours of approved continuing education**. At least 50% of the required hours must be completed through **Core Education** offered by TMCEC, TCCA, or TMCA. The remaining hours may be completed through **Approved External Education**, which must be live instruction but may be either in-person or live, synchronous online. No more than eight (8) hours per academic year may be completed through approved **on-demand Core Education**.

Level III certified clerks must also satisfy the applicable annual renewal requirements. See the [Yearly Certification Renewal](#) webpage for information about renewal applications and automatic certification renewal.

Attachment A
Level III Book Loan Policy & Request Form

Policy & Book Loan Processing

- Complete this form and include a separate **\$100 check (deposited immediately) payable to TMCEC. Your book loan deposit** will remain with TMCEC until all books have been returned.
- A written refund request form (page 2 of this form) must be completed to receive a refund.
- TMCEC will gladly transfer your deposit to each new set of books with proper written notification.
- Books must be returned in original condition **within 4 months** from the date of checkout. Failure to return all borrowed books in their original condition may result in forfeiture of your \$100 deposit.

Name/Borrower on record/Responsible party	Position	Email
City representing	Phone	DEPOSIT CHECK #/AMOUNT
☐ City Check ☐ Personal Check _____		
PAYEE – FULL MAILING ADDRESS (city/state/zip)		

The following books are available for loan:

Part A

1. Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality
2. The Loudest Duck
3. Emotional Intelligence for the Modern Leader
4. Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change (2nd Edition)

Part B:

1. Applied Strategic Planning: An Introduction
2. Understanding Government Budgets: A Guide to Practices in the Public Service
3. Court Security in the New Millennium: A Time for Change (2023)

Part C:

1. Hiring and Firing: What Every Manager Needs to Know
2. The Complete Guide to Performance Appraisal
3. The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential
4. Skills for New Managers
5. Manager's Toolkit: The 13 Skills Managers Need to Succeed

REQUEST DATE: _____ **RETURN DATE:** _____

For TMCEC use only

Book Title(s) Requested

Your signature below indicates you understand and agree to abide by the TMCEC "Book Loan Policy:"

Signature	Date
-----------	------

Attachment B
Book Loan Refund Request Form

LEVEL III BOOK DEPOSIT REFUND REQUEST

I do hereby request a refund for my "Book Deposit" which was paid to TMCEC:

Date of check submitted: _____ Check # submitted: _____

Amount of Check submitted: \$ _____

Refund Information

Name of Borrower: _____

Primary City Represented: _____

Payee's Full Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Position:

☐ Judge ☐ Court Administrator ☐ Court Clerk ☐ Prosecutor ☐ Bailiff/Warrant Officer
☐ Other: _____

Email completed form to: certification@tmcec.com

Forms can also be mailed to:

TMCEC
2210 Hancock Dr.
Austin, TX 78756

FOR TMCEC USE

I have reviewed the payment records and request the following refund check be cut and remitted as requested above:

Amount: \$ _____ TMCEC refund check #: _____

Notes:

TMCEC Staff Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Attachment C (Page 1)
COURT OBSERVATION VERIFICATION FORM

Name: _____

Court: _____

Court Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Guidelines for Court Observations

1. At the time of an observation, a participant must be a Level II (CCCII) in good standing.
2. The original "Observation Record" form must be presented for signature at each visit. Your "Observation Record" must reflect the date of your visit, time spent at the court, and your host's signature verifying your visit.
3. The original "Observation Record" is a required document for journal submittal.
4. Observation hours must add up to a minimum of **40 hours**.
5. Observation hours must be recorded in quarter hour (.25) increments.
6. Observations must be made by scheduling an appointment.
7. Observation must meet the following minimum requirements:
 - i. 4 hours in a court with a population of 250,000 or greater (high volume). There are 12 to choose from below:

Arlington	Dallas	Houston	Plano
Austin	El Paso	Laredo	San Antonio
Corpus Christi	Fort Worth	Lubbock	Irving

- ii. 4 hours in a court with a population between 10,001 and 249,999 (medium volume);
 - iii. 4 hours in a court with a population of 10,000 or less (low volume); and
 - iv. 28 hours of additional observation from any court of your choosing.
8. Population records can be found at various reference sites, including <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045221>.
9. Observations expire on the 2nd anniversary. Using stale or aged observations within a journal could result in a failing journal.
10. Your professional journal is confidential. You will use these observations to prepare your journal as well as other resources such as websites and Texas Office of Court Administration public data.
11. Maintain your own copies for your personal records. TMCEC does not maintain copies of journals.
12. Your "Observation Record" will be audited for time spent in each size court, dates within the two-year period, and verification signatures.

Attachment C (Page 2)
COURT OBSERVATION VERIFICATION FORM

Date	Court Name & Size	#Hours	Printed Name of Court Representative	Verified by: Signature

Attachment D Grading Rubric

Grading Rubric – Level III Journal

I. Presentation (9 points – 4.5 points each):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| | a. Neatness, Professionalism |
| | b. Typed, double spaced |

II. Writing Competency (10 points – 5 points each):

- | | |
|--|---|
| | a. Proper use of grammar |
| | b. Proper use of punctuation & capitalization |

III. Content (81 points – 9 points each):

- | | |
|--|---|
| | a. Expresses accurate application of the law and proper municipal court procedures referencing statutes and/or Level I & II Study Guides; |
| | b. Documents organizational elements of court structures (for example: hierarchy of authority and relationships between judge, clerk, and city government, as well as court divisions); |
| | c. Analyzes proper court procedures and management issues; |
| | d. Describes different ways to handle case flow management issues such as dockets, application of trial court standards, case disposition rates, and monitoring; |
| | e. Documents alternate ways to handle fine collections and enforcement and explains how the court coordinates the different collection venues; |
| | f. Identifies common problems that municipal courts face and practical solutions; |
| | g. Includes sample forms, checklists, docket sheets, pamphlets, and policies from other courts; |
| | h. Comments on effective practices that his/her court might consider adopting; and |
| | i. Incorporates management ideas and theories from the Level III reading list. |
| | TOTAL SCORE |

Attachment E

APPLICATION FOR LEVEL III CERTIFIED MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK - CMCC

To apply for certification, you must provide proof of completion for the following eligibility requirements:

1. "Certificate of Exam Success" for each part of the Level III tests. You can access this on your TMCEC personal profile.
2. Certificate of completion for the 12-hour court administrator program within 3 years prior to application.
3. Certificate of completion for the 24-hour Assessment Clinic (No expiration date).
4. Certificate of completion (or TMCEC academic record) for an additional 28 hours of approved education sponsored by TMCEC, TCCA, TMCA, or a combination thereof.
5. TMCEC records must show you as certified Level I & II in good standing.
6. Official letter indicating successful completion of the *Journal and Court Observation* portion of the program.

Upon approval of this application, your Level III status will be updated in your personal profile, notification will be submitted to the TCCA President and the TCCA Education Committee Chair(s) for recognition before your city council and presentation of your certificate. **When the entire three-level professional program has been completed, the participant will have earned the title of Certified Municipal Court Clerk and will be authorized to place the designation of CMCC following his/her name.**

Name: _____ Application Date: _____

City Served: _____ Title: _____

Court Mailing Address: _____

Court Telephone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____

E-mail: _____ # of years of experience: _____

Position: ☐ Court Administrator ☐ Court Clerk ☐ Deputy Court Clerk ☐ Juvenile Case Manager
☐ Other (Specify): _____

I hereby attest that I have completed the certification requirements for Level III as indicated by the filing of this application.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date: _____

For your certificate:

Please check one: ☐ Yes, I would like my certificate mounted ☐ No, do not mount my certificate

Mail to Texas Municipal Court Education Center, 2210 Hancock Drive, Austin, Texas 78756
This is a cooperative project of the Texas Court Clerks Association, Texas Municipal Courts
Education Center and Texas State University.