

The following policy establishes the protocol and requirements for the USA Karate Dan Certification Program. The goal of the program is to encourage a broad understanding of the different styles that make up modern Karate-do, while applying consistent standards for evaluation, recognition, and certification.

CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS

USA Karate recognizes three pathways for Dan recognition and certification:

1. Honorary Dan Recognition
2. Homologation of Existing Rank
3. USA Karate Dan Testing and Certification

Each pathway is separate and has its own requirements.

HONORARY DAN RECOGNITION

USA Karate may award honorary Dan grades to individuals whose contributions to Karate-do, USA Karate, or the martial arts community merit special recognition.

Honorary Dan grades are granted solely at the discretion of USA Karate. They are not the same as homologation or testing certification. Honorary Dan grades are not subject to testing requirements and no fee is charged.

A candidate for honorary Dan recognition may be recommended by another person or may self-nominate. Nominations shall be reviewed by the Dan Certification Coordinator and a group of 3-4 Examiners. If the person nominated is part of the review group, or if any reviewer has a direct conflict of interest involving the nominee, including a student, club, or organizational relationship, that person must recuse themselves from the review process.

For honorary Dan grades requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall make a formal recommendation to the President based on input from the Examiners.

The Dan Certification Coordinator, or the person making the recommendation, must provide the President with a brief written description of the justification for the honorary grade being recommended.

Honorary Dan recognition must be approved by the President and/or Board of Directors. Honorary certificates may be presented at the next USA Karate Signature Event following approval. If the honoree is not able to attend, the certificate may be mailed.

DAN HOMOLOGATION

USA Karate may homologate, or grant reciprocity, to persons possessing a valid Dan Certificate from their style or parent karate organization.

Applicants seeking homologation must submit the required application, documentation, and fee through the approved USA Karate application process. Supporting documentation may include a current rank certificate, rank history, organizational affiliation, lineage verification, date of rank issuance, evidence of time in previous rank, and other evidence requested by USA Karate.

Applicants seeking homologation must meet the same minimum age and time-in-rank requirements that apply to testing applicants for the rank being requested. USA Karate may deny or defer a homologation request if the applicant does not satisfy the applicable age or time-in-rank requirements, even if the applicant holds the rank through another organization.

Applicants who possess a Junior Dan, 1st Dan, 2nd Dan, or 3rd Dan from their style or parent karate organization may be eligible to receive a USA Karate Dan Certificate without completing performance requirements or taking a test, provided they meet USA Karate homologation recognition criteria, including applicable age and time-in-rank requirements.

Applicants who possess a 4th Dan or higher from their style or parent karate organization are subject to additional review by the Dan Certification Coordinator and/or appointed review panel. USA Karate may approve the homologation request, request additional documentation, require a performance evaluation, or deny the request.

Homologation of 7th Dan, 8th Dan, and 9th Dan ranks is extremely rare and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where the applicant provides substantial documentation verifying the legitimacy, recognition, and standing of the rank within their parent organization and karate lineage.

For homologation requests requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall make a formal recommendation to the President based on input from the Examiners.

For homologation requests requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall prepare a written recommendation to the President. The written recommendation shall include the candidate's application, supporting documentation, rank requested, recommendation of the Examiner panel, list of Examiners who reviewed the request, and any additional information the coordinator believes is relevant to the approval decision.

Submission of an application and payment of the fee does not guarantee homologation.

USA KARATE DAN TESTING AND CERTIFICATION

Persons seeking full USA Karate Dan Certification through testing must submit the required application, documentation, and fee through the approved USA Karate application process.

Testing may apply to applicants who do not possess a Dan Certificate from another organization, applicants whose homologation request requires further evaluation, or applicants seeking promotion through the USA Karate Dan Certification Program.

Candidates must be members in good standing of USA Karate. Candidates may hold an existing karate rank from their organization and, if applicable, must validate that rank by presenting a copy of their karate rank certificate and/or verifiable evidence of current rank.

Dan testing will be conducted by a testing panel assembled by the Dan Certification Coordinator. The panel will consist of 3-4 content experts, in addition to the coordinator, selected from the official USA Karate List of Examiners and/or Master's Caucus.

Dan testing may be conducted at USA Karate Signature Events, including but not limited to the Junior International Cup, USA Open International Karate Championship, USA National Karate Championship, and/or Team Trials. USA Karate may also establish regional Examining Boards from time to time to administer testing between Signature Events.

In certain cases, Dan testing may be scheduled at another USA Karate event with the approval of the Director of Sport.

The USA Karate Board of Directors reserves the right to add or remove examiners from the List of Examiners.

The USA Karate Panel of Examiners may certify an applicant's rank from Junior Shodan (Junior 1st Dan) and Shodan (1st Dan) through Kyudan (9th Dan), subject to the requirements and approval process established in this policy.

For tested ranks requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall prepare a written request to the President. The written request shall include the candidate's application, supporting documentation, rank requested, date and location of the examination, recommendation of the testing panel, list of Examiners who conducted the examination, and any additional information the Coordinator believes is relevant to the approval decision.

FEES

Junior Dan under 18: \$150

1st Dan, 2nd Dan, or 3rd Dan: \$250

4th Dan or 5th Dan: \$500

6th Dan: \$600

7th Dan: \$700

8th Dan: \$800

9th Dan: \$1,000

Note: If a Junior Dan certificate holder later wishes to obtain a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Dan Certificate, they need only pay the difference in cost.

Honorary Dan grades awarded by USA Karate are not subject to any certification, testing, or homologation fee.

Payment of a fee does not guarantee certification, homologation, or promotion. USA Karate reserves the right to deny certification or homologation when sufficient evidence of rank legitimacy, eligibility, age, time-in-rank, or performance competency cannot be established.

TESTING REQUIREMENTS

Candidates seeking USA Karate Dan Rank Certification through testing, and/or those required by USA Karate to complete a performance evaluation, shall be evaluated in accordance with the following requirements. The minimum age and time-in-rank requirements listed below also apply to homologation applicants for the corresponding rank.

Note for Junior 1st-5th Dan:

If the candidate opts to demonstrate free sparring, then the Panel of Examiners will select an opponent from the candidate pool to spar with the candidate under examination. The free sparring bout will not exceed one and one-half minutes running time and will not be stopped and scored. The candidate must demonstrate control, skill, strategy, and technique appropriate to the rank.

If the candidate opts to demonstrate Ippon Kumite, then the candidate shall bring a partner to demonstrate such techniques to the Examining Board. The candidate shall demonstrate 1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring techniques, which must include varied punching and kicking attacks to the head and midsection.

Junior Shodan (Junior 1st Dan) Level:

- Minimum age 12 and up to 15 years
- Demonstrate/perform one Kata from candidate's style with skill appropriate to the rank
- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 5 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate

Shodan (1st Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 16 years old
- Demonstrate/perform one Kata from candidate's style with skill appropriate to the rank

- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 5 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate

Nidan (2nd Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 18 years old
- Minimum of two years at Shodan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform one Kata from candidate's style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of the demonstrated Kata from the candidate's style and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata
- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 5 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate

Sandan (3rd Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 21 years old
- Minimum of three years at Nidan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform two Katas from candidate's style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of one of the Katas performed and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata
- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 10 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate

Yondan (4th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 25 years old
- Minimum of four years at Sandan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform two Katas: one from candidate's style and another from another style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of one of the Katas performed and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata

- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 10 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate
- Provide written essay explaining history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage

Godan (5th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 30 years old
- Minimum of five years at Yondan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform three Katas: two Katas from candidate's style and another from another style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of one of the Katas performed and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata
- Demonstrate either Jiyu Kumite (Free Sparring) or 10 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) at the option of the candidate
- Provide written essay explaining history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage

Rokudan (6th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 36 years old
- Minimum of six years at Godan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform three Katas: two Katas from candidate's style and another from another style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of one of the Katas performed and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata
- Demonstrate 10 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) with skill appropriate to rank
- Provide written essay explaining history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage

Nanadan (7th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 43 years old
- Minimum of seven years at Rokudan rank to be eligible for promotion

- Demonstrate/perform three Katas: two Katas from candidate's style and one from another style with skill appropriate to rank
- Demonstrate Bunkai of one of the Katas performed and respond to questions on the application and principles of the Kata
- Demonstrate 10 Ippon Kumite Techniques (1 Step/Partner-Drill Sparring) with skill appropriate to rank
- Provide written essay explaining history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage

Hachidan (8th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 55 years old
- Minimum of ten years at Nanadan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform three Katas: one from candidate's style and two from two other styles with skill appropriate to rank
- Provide written essay explaining history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage
- Provide written materials summarizing Karate experience, history, and contributions to the Art

Kyudan (9th Dan) Level:

- Minimum age is 68 years old
- Minimum of thirteen years at Hachidan rank to be eligible for promotion
- Demonstrate/perform three Katas: one from candidate's style and two from two other styles with skill appropriate to rank
- Present/explain general history of the candidate's style of Karate and/or lineage
- Provide written materials summarizing Karate experience, history, and contributions to the Art

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND RECUSAL

Any Dan Examiner, member of a review panel, or the Dan Certification Coordinator must recuse themselves from reviewing, evaluating, recommending, or voting on any application, test, homologation request, or honorary Dan nomination involving one of their own students, members of their own club, or members of their own organization.

In the event of a recusal by the Dan Certification Coordinator, USA Karate may appoint another qualified individual from the official USA Karate List of Examiners and/or Master's Caucus to fulfill the coordinator's role for that specific matter.

Recusal is required to protect the integrity, impartiality, and credibility of the USA Karate Dan Certification Program.

FINAL PROCESSING

After all required reviews and approvals have been completed, the USA Karate National Office shall issue the approved USA Karate Dan Grade, update the member's profile in the USA Karate membership database as applicable, add the member to the official USA Karate list of Dan holders as applicable, and coordinate delivery of the USA Karate Dan Certificate.

If an application is denied, deferred, requires additional documentation, or requires testing or further evaluation, the National Office shall notify the candidate of the result and any next steps.

FINAL AUTHORITY

All Dan certification, homologation, testing, and honorary recognition decisions are subject to final approval by USA Karate. USA Karate may deny, defer, or request additional review of any application when the applicant does not meet the requirements of this policy or when additional verification is necessary.

USA Karate reserves the right to amend these procedures, establish additional review requirements, and make final determinations in the best interest of the organization and the integrity of the USA Karate Dan Certification Program.

DAN CERTIFICATION PROCESS FLOW

PURPOSE

This document outlines the administrative process for receiving, reviewing, and processing USA Karate Dan Certification applications for Dan Testing, Dan Homologation, and Honorary Dan Recognition.

GENERAL APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 1. Candidate Completes Application

The candidate completes the Dan Certification Application through the USA Karate website at www.usankf.org.

The candidate must indicate whether they are requesting:

- Dan Testing
- Dan Homologation of an existing rank
- Honorary Dan Recognition
- Other Dan certification review as authorized by USA Karate

STEP 2. Application Automatically Forwarded to National Office

Once submitted, the Dan Certification Application is automatically forwarded to the USA Karate National Office.

STEP 3. National Office Administrative Review

The USA Karate National Office reviews the submission to verify:

- Application completion
- Required documentation
- USA Karate membership status, if applicable
- Payment of the required fee, if applicable
- Rank requested

- Requested certification pathway
- Evidence of current rank, if applicable
- Applicable age and time-in-rank requirements, if applicable

If the application is incomplete, payment has not been verified, or required documentation is missing, the National Office may contact the candidate to request the missing information before the application proceeds.

After the National Office verifies the application, the application will proceed according to the pathway requested.

HONORARY DAN RECOGNITION PROCESS

Step 4. Honorary Dan Recommendation

Honorary Dan Recognition may be recommended by the Dan Certification Coordinator, a Dan Examiner, another USA Karate representative, or another individual with knowledge of the candidate's contributions to Karate-do, USA Karate, or the martial arts community.

The person making the recommendation must provide the President with a brief written description of the justification for the honorary grade being recommended.

The written justification should include:

- The candidate's name
- The honorary Dan grade being recommended
- A summary of the candidate's contributions to Karate-do, USA Karate, or the martial arts community
- The reason the honorary grade is appropriate
- Any supporting information the recommender believes is relevant

Step 5. Review by Dan Certification Coordinator and Examiners

Honorary Dan recommendations shall be reviewed by the Dan Certification Coordinator and a group of 3-4 Examiners, unless otherwise directed by the President and/or Board of Directors.

If the Dan Certification Coordinator is the person making the recommendation, the Coordinator may still provide the written justification but must comply with all conflict-of-interest and recusal requirements.

Step 6. Coordinator Recommendation to President

For honorary Dan grades requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall make a formal recommendation to the President based on the written justification and input from the Examiners.

The recommendation shall include:

- The written justification for the honorary grade
- The honorary Dan grade requested
- The input or recommendation of the Examiners
- Any conflict-of-interest or recusal information, if applicable
- Any additional information the coordinator believes is relevant to the approval decision

The President may approve the request, deny the request, request additional information, or refer the matter to the Board of Directors for review and approval when required or appropriate.

DAN TESTING PROCESS

Step 7. Referral to Dan Certification Coordinator

For candidates requesting Dan Testing, the National Office shall forward the verified application to the Dan Certification Coordinator.

Step 8. Coordinator Review and Testing Panel Assignment

The Dan Certification Coordinator shall review the application and determine the appropriate testing panel to conduct the examination.

The testing panel should be selected based on the rank requested, availability of qualified Examiners, style or technical expertise, and any conflict-of-interest or recusal requirements.

Step 9. Scheduling of Dan Testing

Dan Testing should be scheduled at the next available USA Karate Signature Event whenever possible.

Signature Events may include, but are not limited to:

- USA Open International Karate Championship
- USA National Karate Championship
- Team Trials
- Other designated USA Karate Signature Events

In certain cases, Dan Testing may be scheduled at another USA Karate event with the approval of the Director of Sport.

Step 10. Testing Panel Conducts Examination

The approved testing panel shall conduct the Dan examination in accordance with the USA Karate Dan Certification Policy, including the applicable testing requirements for the rank being requested.

Step 11. Testing Panel Recommendation

Following the examination, the testing panel shall provide its recommendation to the Dan Certification Coordinator.

The recommendation may include:

- Approval
- Denial
- Request for additional evaluation
- Deferral to a future testing opportunity

Step 12. Coordinator Request for President or Board Approval

For tested ranks requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall prepare a written request to the President.

The written request shall include:

- The candidate's application
- Supporting documentation submitted by the candidate
- The rank requested
- The date and location of the examination
- The recommendation of the testing panel
- The list of Examiners who conducted the examination
- Any additional information the coordinator believes is relevant to the approval decision

The President may approve the request, deny the request, request additional information, or refer the matter to the Board of Directors for review and approval when required or appropriate.

DAN HOMOLOGATION PROCESS

Step 13. Homologation of Junior Dan, 1st Dan, 2nd Dan, and 3rd Dan

For candidates requesting homologation of Junior Dan, 1st Dan, 2nd Dan, or 3rd Dan, once the National Office verifies that the application is complete and all requirements have been satisfied, the National Office may automatically process the rank for homologation.

The National Office shall then complete final processing as outlined in this document.

Step 14. Homologation Requests for 4th Dan and Higher

For candidates requesting homologation of 4th Dan or higher, once the National Office verifies that the application is complete, payment has been received, and basic eligibility requirements have been reviewed, the application shall be forwarded to the Dan Certification Coordinator.

Step 15. Coordinator Review and Examiner Panel Assignment

The Dan Certification Coordinator shall review the application and supporting documentation.

The coordinator shall assemble a panel of Examiners to review the homologation request. The panel should be selected based on the rank requested, availability of qualified Examiners, style or technical expertise, and any conflict-of-interest or recusal requirements.

Step 16. Examiner Panel Review

The Examiner panel shall review the candidate's documentation and determine whether the candidate's existing rank can be homologated or whether a Dan test or performance evaluation is required.

The panel may consider:

- Current rank certificate
- Rank history
- Date of rank issuance
- Time in previous rank
- Age eligibility
- Parent organization or style affiliation
- Lineage verification
- Contributions to Karate-do
- Any additional documentation requested by USA Karate

Step 17. Panel Recommendation

Following its review, the Examiner panel shall make a recommendation to the Dan Certification Coordinator.

The recommendation may include:

- Approval for homologation
- Denial of homologation
- Request for additional documentation
- Requirement that the candidate complete a Dan test or performance evaluation
- Deferral for additional review

Step 18. Coordinator Recommendation for President or Board Approval

For homologation requests requiring approval by the President and/or Board of Directors, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall prepare a written recommendation to the President.

The written recommendation shall include:

- The candidate's application
- Supporting documentation submitted by the candidate
- The rank requested
- The recommendation of the Examiner panel
- The list of Examiners who reviewed the homologation request
- Whether the panel recommends straight homologation or requires a Dan test or performance evaluation
- Any additional information the Coordinator believes is relevant to the approval decision

The President may approve the request, deny the request, request additional information, or refer the matter to the Board of Directors for review and approval when required or appropriate.

FINAL PROCESSING

Step 19. National Office Final Processing

After all required reviews and approvals have been completed, the Dan Certification Coordinator shall provide the result to the USA Karate National Office for final processing.

If the Dan grade is approved through testing, homologation, or honorary recognition, the National Office shall:

- Issue the approved USA Karate Dan Grade
- Update the member's profile in the USA Karate membership database, if applicable
- Add the member to the official USA Karate list of Dan holders, if applicable
- Coordinate delivery of the USA Karate Dan Certificate

If the application is denied, deferred, requires additional documentation, or requires testing or further evaluation, the National Office shall notify the candidate of the result and any next steps.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Honorary Dan grades are not subject to any certification, testing, or homologation fee.

Applicants seeking homologation must meet the same minimum age and time-in-rank requirements that apply to testing applicants for the rank being requested.

Homologation of 7th Dan, 8th Dan, and 9th Dan is extremely rare and requires substantial supporting documentation.

Payment of the application, testing, or homologation fee does not guarantee approval.

All testing, homologation, and honorary recognition reviews must comply with USA Karate's conflict-of-interest and recusal requirements.

Testing outside of a USA Karate Signature Event should be limited and requires approval of the Director of Sport.

USA Karate reserves the right to deny, defer, request additional documentation, or require a Dan test or performance evaluation when necessary to protect the integrity of the Dan Certification Program.


KARATE

USA Karate Dan Certification Process Flow

Testing, Homologation, and Honorary Recognition


