Periodicals Accuracy, Grading & Evaluation (PAGE)

Technical Guide
June 2018

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Technical Guide Modifications

Changes within this Technical Guide are preceded by a **maroon** paragraph mark (**|**) and followed by the actual change identified in **bold, italicized maroon font**.

Change	Page Number(s)	Rationale	Date Changed
Certification period extended	2, 3, 7	PAGE Certification underwent extension from one year to two years.	7/5/2012
NCSC Address Change	CV, 5, 7	Address change will go into effect 12/01/2012	11/16/2012
Executive Level Exam	7	Modified to reduce exam questions from 100 to 25.	7/25/2014
Version number	4	Removed verbiage	7/19/2016
RIBBS website	1,2,6,7	Changed to PostalPro website	6/8/2018

Purpose/Overview

The Periodicals Accuracy, Grading, and Evaluation (PAGE) program is a process designed in cooperation with the publishing industry to evaluate Publication and Print Planning (PPP) software and to determine its' accuracy in calculating virtual percentage of advertising according to *Domestic Mail Manual© (DMM)* standards. Participation in the program is voluntary. Although this program evaluates and validates advertising percentage calculations, PAGE does not eliminate physical review of issues or annual audits of Periodicals prepared using PAGE-certified software. PAGE does allow Periodicals mailers to stop the submission of marked copies for every edition and issue, unless otherwise requested by postal officials. PAGE certification is available to developers of software products and the software users. This program will test and certify the calculation accuracy of PPP software on the product level. On the user level, the competency and general knowledge of Periodicals mailings as set forth in the DMM and applicable Customer Support Rulings (CSRs) is tested.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) defines a PAGE-certified software product as a Publication and Print Planning (PPP) software specifically written to operate on a particular platform or operating system and assigned a specific version number. Many products use different language compilers to process files within different operating systems or on different hardware platforms. Therefore, to maintain the highest quality standards, PAGE will certify a developer's product by platform and version number. The developer may submit some or all platforms for certifications. PAGE will evaluate each PPP software product platform on its own merits and will issue a specific certification for that platform when warranted.

Note: Throughout this manual any reference to a "publication and print planning software product" implies a product written for a specific hardware/software platform at the current version number.

Example:

Developer	**PPP Product**	**Platforms**	**Version**
Mags R Us	Super Layout	Windows NT for PC	1.2

Types of Certification

Product Certification

Product certification is available to companies who write their own print production and planning software to facilitate postal calculations of virtual percentage of advertising. The software products may be available to mailers for purchase (retail product) or developed for internal use only (proprietary software).

When purchasing the testing package, developers will ship the completed pre-certification survey and the software to the PAGE team for analysis of the calculation algorithms and procedures.

Upon successful completion of testing, developers are awarded a certificate indicating their company name, the product name and the version certified. Certified products will be listed on the PAGE certified list posted on our Web site at https://postalpro.usps.gov/certifications.

User Certification

Upon product certification or purchase of a PAGE-certified product, user certification is available to those who will operate the software. User's certification requires submission of an electronic layout of a current (largest) edition of their publication along with a manually marked copy of the same issue/edition. Users must complete a written examination of fundamental knowledge of current Periodicals mailing requirements and regulations. Participants must score a 90% or better to pass the exam. Upon successful completion of testing, users are awarded a certificate indicating their name, company name, publication(s), and the particular product they are certified to use. **Certification is for two years if there are no significant changes or enhancements to the accuracy percentage calculation logic or weight calculation logic**. Certified users will be listed on the PAGE-certified list posted on our Web site at https://postalpro.usps.gov/certifications.

Test Criteria

PAGE evaluates the accuracy of publication and print planning software products by testing advertising percentage calculations and algorithms and the basic fundamental regulations of Periodicals mail. The USPS selects testing scenarios based upon, but not limited to these key factors:

- Recent Customer Support Rulings released

- Significant errors are being detected by business mail entry units (BMEU's)

- New Periodicals regulations

- DMM changes affecting Periodicals classification

Clarifications of Periodicals Mailing Standards

The following information is provided to assist you in the PAGE certification process.

Customer Support Rulings were created to assist postal personnel and customers with interpreting, clarifying, and applying the meaning of the standards contained in the *Domestic Mail Manual© (DMM)*. The rulings are intended to be used in conjunction with the DMM mailing standards. Customer Support Rulings (CSR) are based on requirements current at the time of issuance. Future rulings may supplement, amend, or supersede the present rulings.

New rulings are issued by the Manager, Mailing Standards in Washington, DC. Recent Customer Support Rulings can be found on the USPS PostalPro web site at https://postalpro.usps.gov/ or in the USPS Postal Explorer at http://pe.usps.gov/text/CSR/csrtoc.asp. The latest version of the DMM, Federal Register Notices, and *Postal Bulletin* articles can be found at www.usps.com or http://pe.usps.gov.

PAGE Cycles and Recertification

Cycles Initiated from Changes in Periodicals Mailing

The cycle period for **PAGE certification generally lasts for two years** for a user and a developer. However, dates in the cycle are tentative. The USPS reserves the right to begin a new cycle at any time it deems factors causing significant changes to the dynamics of Periodicals mailing.

- Significant changes made to the DMM or Periodicals regulations
- Changes made to or release of new Customer Support Rulings

Developers and publishers will be notified when changes occur.

Recertification Due to Software Changes

Any change to an existing software product must be reported in writing on letterhead from the software development company to the PAGE Department at the National Customer Support Center (NCSC) before release. The change will be evaluated to determine whether the calculation logics are affected and if the product and/or the users of the product require recertification. Recertified products and/or users are certified through the end of the current PAGE cycle. It is the responsibility of the developer to notify their customer if changes to the software require them to be recertified by the PAGE Department.

PAGE Certification Calendar

PAGE certification testing is continuous. Developers may begin the certification process at any time. Developer software is certified for two years, and they will be notified 60 days prior to expiration of their certification.

Product/Developer Certification Information

Product and Version Number

The USPS requires publishers to indicate the product name and version number in the header of the PAGE report.

Version Number

All PAGE product certifications apply to specific versions of publication and print planning software products. To receive PAGE certification, applicants must follow these guidelines:

- If a grading review of the submitted product is completed without the need for any corrections or changes, the original number of the publication and print planning software product submitted will be certified.
- After grading, if any corrections or changes to the publication and print planning software logic are required before certification is granted for any of the test categories, a new version number will be specified by the developer for the ppp software product after all corrections/modifications are successfully completed. The components of the version number are as follows:

Version No.	**Revision No.**	**PAGE Cycle**	**Manufacturer No.**
2.01	.03	.A	.99.09

Version No. contains the software version number assigned by the developer. The number left of the decimal point represents the major release number, and the number to the right of the decimal point represents the version of advertising percentage calculation logic code. Any change to an existing software product's calculation logic must be reported in writing on company letterhead to the PAGE Department at the National Customer Support Center (NCSC) before release. The change will be evaluated to determine whether the product requires recertification.

Revision No. contains the software revision number representing any non-calculation logic change to the software product. A change in the revision number would be enacted by, but not limited to, an update of enhancements to the user interface; updates to print drivers; or other types of revisions or updates.

PAGE Cycle contains the PAGE cycle indicator assigned by the PAGE Department.

Manufacturer No. contains the manufacturer number, which may be used by the manufacturer to indicate other internal tracking information.

Note: If the manufacturer number is used to indicate database release dates, the USPS recommends using a 2-byte number to indicate the year followed by a decimal and another 2-byte number to indicate the month of the database.

PAGE Phraseology

The USPS prohibits the use of any PAGE Phraseology on all official USPS forms and required documentation, including postage statement facsimiles and the USPS Qualification report. However, PAGE-certified developers may use the phrase "PAGE-certified" on marketing materials and other user documentation.

Licensing Certified Products/Engines

If the PAGE-certified software is licensed to or from another company, the USPS National Customer Support Center (NCSC) must be informed in writing and complete testing must be conducted successfully to obtain certification for the new product.

If you use your PAGE-certified product as the publication and print planning software engine for other Periodicals products within your product line, we recommend that you pursue certification for each individual product. However, you may choose to inform the NCSC of this product inter-relationship in writing on company letterhead. Certification will be granted to all products after successful completion of testing of the original product. The NCSC reserves the right to conduct random tests on any certified product during the certification cycle.

Field Error Detection and Resolution

Occasionally, advertising percentage calculation errors are detected and reported by USPS field personnel or mailers after a PAGE-certified product has been distributed to customers. If this situation occurs, the following protocol is followed to resolve the problem:

1) The PAGE Department starts an incident report file for the product and version number.

2) PAGE determines if the problem is a software calculation error or some other problem such as a user setup issue.

3) PAGE alerts the developer to the existence of the problem.

4) PAGE and the developer collaborate in determining a reasonable time frame in which to correct the problem. If the time frame is exceeded, PAGE certification may be revoked or suspended.

5) PAGE reserves the right to request the developer retest any applicable test files before release.

6) When the PAGE Department determines the problem has been corrected, the developer will be advised they may release the corrected application.

It is the goal of the PAGE Department to assist developers in achieving the highest quality publication and print planning software product possible. The field error detection and resolution policy is a tool for ensuring continued accuracy of calculations. Regardless of cycle schedules, quality assurance remains an ongoing part of PAGE certification.

The PAGE Process for Developers

General Testing

To achieve PAGE certification the following instructions, measuring guidelines and parameters must be followed explicitly.

Testing at the National Customer Support Center (NCSC): Developers must send the completed PAGE Order Form, the pre-qualification survey, appropriate fees, and the software to the NCSC located in Memphis, TN to initiate the testing process. If any documentation is incomplete or incorrect, the developer must resubmit with the corrections indicated by the NCSC.

All test output must be mailed to:

> **BMA Certification – PAGE**
> **National Customer Support Center**
> **United States Postal Service**
> **225 N. Humphreys Blvd Ste 501**
> **Memphis, TN 38188-1001**

The publisher must submit a marked copy of the publication to the NCSC for the evaluation. The percentage of advertising calculations will be thoroughly examined. The developer must provide technical support by telephone conference during the evaluation. The NCSC will modify editorial content to advertising content to ensure the software updates and re-calculates the total advertising postage accurately. When all calculations are deemed 100% accurate, a product certificate will be issued to the developer for the specific product and version number.
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Developer Certification Criteria

Each product attempting certification is examined for its accuracy of calculations and compliance with current DMM mailing standards and Customer Support Rulings (CSR's). The evaluation includes inspection of advertising percentage calculations including:

- Public Service Announcements
- publishers own advertising
- white space
- neutral space
- inserts (tip-ins, tip-ons, onserts, outserts, etc.)
- advertising on polybags, wrappers, bellybands, etc.
- advertising in supplements
- reader service cards
- questionnaires

If the product presented is 100% accurate and in compliance with current DMM mailing standards, certification is awarded. If any errors preventing certification are detected, an evaluation report identifying the specific violations and their appropriate DMM references will be provided to the developer. After the proper change/adjustments are made to the software, the developer is responsible for supplying a new copy of the software for analysis.

After the developer has successfully completed the testing process, a certificate will be awarded naming the developer, product, and version number. This information will also be included in the official PAGE-certified products listing on the PostalPro Web site at https://postalpro.usps.gov/certifications.

Products certified for advertising percentage calculations receive a PAGE certificate and have their name, address, and product name and version number included in the list of PAGE-certified software products. Current certified product listings can be found on the USPS PostalPro website at https://postalpro.usps.gov/certifications.

Developer certifications are valid for two years unless changes to the testing scenario are deemed necessary as described under Test Criteria (page 2).

Developers of proprietary software must complete this certification process before users are eligible to apply for certification.

User Certification Information

Each individual requesting user certification must complete the user certification process. The user must submit the PAGE User's Application and examination processing fee to the PAGE Department to receive an exam packet. Users have 30 days from the date the exam packet is mailed to complete and return all portions of the tests to the National Customer Support Center for evaluation.

The examination consists of two parts:

1) The user creates an electronic layout of the largest edition of a recent issue of their publication. The advertising percent and weight must also be placed on the hardcopy electronic layout along with the publication name, issue/cycle date of the publication, total advertising in square inches, and total number of pages.

2) The user prepares a manually marked copy of the same publications edition/issue under evaluation. The NCSC will analyze the electronic copy, the manually marked copies, and the documentation for proper calculations of percentage of advertising.

Once the examination is completed, submit all test portions to the National Customer Support Center for grading. All test output must be mailed to:

> **BMA Certification – PAGE**
> **National Customer Support Center**
> **United States Postal Service**
> **225 N. Humphreys Blvd Ste 501**
> **Memphis, TN 38188-1001**

Minimum scores to successfully complete this phase of certification are:
1) Manually marked copy   100%
2) Electronic Layout of marked copy   100%
3) User Examination   90%

User Testing Requirements

There are two levels of examination. Each examination is "open book."

Executive Level examination – *25 questions* – Topics cover characteristics, types, design, and eligibility of Periodicals class mail for bound and unbound publications.

Associate level examination – 20 questions – Designed for the entry-level user whose general functions in the publishing industry may include marketing, sales, data entry, etc. This exam covers basic knowledge of advertising, non-advertising, and editorial content.

User certification requires a minimum of two individuals from the company to complete the Executive Level examination. Additional users of PAGE-certified software may take the Associate Level examination.

All parts of the completed test packet must be submitted for evaluation to the NCSC at the same time. If any part of the test packet is not passed, the user may request another exam and pay the appropriate fee for each exam taken.

User certifications are valid for two years after the initial certification. Recertification may be required before the two-year period ends if changes are made to the software or Periodicals mail rules.

Users who have been certified for advertising percentage calculations will receive a PAGE certificate and have their name, company information, and publication(s) included in the list of PAGE-certified software users. Current certified user listings can be found on the USPS PostalPro website at https://postalpro.usps.gov/certifications.