



American College of Veterinary Pathologists

2021 Phase I Certifying Examination

Candidate Handbook

The mission of the ACVP is to promote excellence in veterinary pathology through our members as they protect and improve animal, human, and environmental health to benefit society.

Questions about the Phase I examination may be addressed to exam@acvp.org.

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Policies, Procedures and Requirements

This document supersedes all previous publications of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP) concerning its policies, procedures and requirements for certification. The admission of a candidate to the ACVP Certifying Examination is governed by the policies, procedures and requirements in effect during the current application period. The ACVP reserves the right to make changes in its fees, policies, procedures and requirements at any time, with or without prior notice.

Introduction

The ACVP Phase I Certifying Examination Candidate Handbook is a resource for trainees, sponsors, mentors and training programs interested in ACVP board certification. A separate Candidate Handbook for the 2021 Phase II Certifying Examination will be made available. However, general information relevant to both the Phase I and Phase II Certifying Examinations is included in this handbook. Both Candidate Handbooks should be consulted by new trainees at the beginning of a training program, whenever changes in training are considered, during training to ensure that eligibility requirements are being met, and again near the end of training to prepare to apply, prepare, and sit for the ACVP Certifying Examination. Candidate Handbooks for the Certifying Examination will be updated as requirements or examination details change, and the “Exam” section of the ACVP website should always be referenced for the most current version of the Candidate Handbooks.

Additional information regarding the Certifying Examination, particularly documents or information that may be revised from year to year, may be found in the “Exam” section of the ACVP website and are also hyperlinked throughout the Candidate Handbook.

Contact Information

Questions regarding the Phase I ACVP Certifying Examination or eligibility criteria should be sent to exam@acvp.org.

Certifying Examination

The ACVP Certifying Examination is a two-phase process that candidates must pass in order to be certified as Diplomates in either veterinary anatomic or clinical pathology.

Certifying Examination content is based on a blueprint of key tasks and species, organ systems and processes, and distribution of topics. The Blueprint documents for anatomic and clinical pathology are included in the links below. Candidates are strongly encouraged to review the blueprints for their respective examinations prior to making their study plans.

[Job Task Analysis Anatomic Blueprint](#)

[Job Task Analysis Clinical Pathology Blueprint](#)

Phase I Examination

The Phase I examination is a 2-hour examination composed of 100 multiple choice questions that cover

all aspects of veterinary general pathology. The Phase I examination is the same for candidates interested in either anatomic or clinical pathology and must be passed to be eligible to take the Phase II Certifying Examination in veterinary anatomic or clinical pathology. The Phase I examination tests knowledge of mechanisms fundamental to disease in animals such as principles of cellular injury, inflammation and repair, hemodynamic disorders, physical and chemical injury, neoplasia, congenital and genetic diseases, molecular pathology and infections. The mechanisms tested in this section are general in that they relate to most animal species and exclude entities in single species.

The Phase I examination dates are updated on the ACVP website.

The passing point (cut score) for the Phase I examination is 64/100 points. To pass an examination, a score of equal to or greater than the cut score must be achieved. Information regarding establishment of the cut score is included in the Preparation, Validation and Scoring of the Phase I Examination section that follows.

[Important Examination Dates](#)

[Phase I Examination Reading List](#)

This reading list is provided as guidance for candidates. The sources are common journals and textbooks that represent the appropriate level of pathology knowledge. Candidates should feel free to utilize other equivalent sources and should seek mentor guidance if they are unclear about source equivalency. For journals, candidates should focus on reviews published within the last five years but note that only articles in print or electronically released by September 1st of the year preceding the exam are considered for that year's examination (e.g. September 1, 2020 for the 2021 Phase I examination). For textbooks, candidates should utilize a recent version that is representative of current pathology knowledge.

[Principal Sources](#)

- Kumar V, et al. Robbins and Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease (Chapters 1 to 9)
- Zachary JF. Pathologic Basis of Veterinary Disease (Chapters 1 to 6)

[Supplemental Sources](#)

- Cheville NC. Ultrastructural Pathology: The Comparative Cellular Basis of Disease
- Haschek WM, Rousseaux CG, Wallig MA. Fundamentals of Toxicologic Pathology
- Veterinary Pathology (review articles)
- Toxicologic Pathology (review articles)
- New England Journal of Medicine (review articles)
- American Journal of Pathology (review articles)

[Phase I Sample Questions](#)

[Administration of the Phase I Examination](#)

The Phase I examination is administered in partnership with Scantron Corporation, a certification and licensure testing company. Scantron Corporation utilizes more than 500 testing locations throughout the

United States and Canada, as well as more than 225 international testing centers. Testing centers usually are located in commercial areas of cities so that public transportation and restaurants are typically available. All sites offer accessibility to disabled individuals. The internet-based test delivery system (PASS) is easy to use and requires no previous computer experience. The PASS demonstration, available to all candidates at the testing facility, guides candidates through all system features and functionalities and allows candidates time to become familiar with the system prior to beginning the examination.

Approximately 45 days prior to the testing dates for the Phase I examination, candidates will receive an email notice from Scantron Corporation to schedule their examination at a testing center. The notice to schedule will provide candidates with a unique username/password and the URL address to access Scantron Corporation's online test scheduling system to select a testing location, based on seating availability within Scantron Corporation's network of test sites. Additional information regarding Scantron Corporation Testing Centers can be found on the ACVP website.

Information will be provided to candidates via email and on the ACVP website in the event that testing centers are closed due to emergent conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Phase I/Scantron Corporation FAQs](#)

Responsibilities of Candidates, Sponsors and Training Institutions

Responsibilities of the Candidate

The level of responsibility on trainees for their own education is high and demands extensive independent study of textbooks and journals, and consultation with pathologists, clinicians and other specialists. Supplementary participation as a student in lectures or participation in seminars may be useful. However, this should not be the major emphasis of the training. The Certifying Examination is the culmination of years of intensive preparation involving a wide range of animal species. A final phase of concentrated study can generally be successful only if the preceding training has been suitable in breadth and depth.

Responsibilities of the Sponsor

The sponsor's endorsement of a candidate's application certifies that the candidate has had training adequate to permit sitting for the examination. Sponsorship of a candidate is not to be taken lightly because the ACVP Board of Directors and Credentialing Committee puts considerable trust in sponsors in determining the acceptability of a candidate. A sponsor's endorsement clearly does not guarantee success for the candidate, but it should guarantee that the candidate fulfills the minimum requirements and has been thoroughly prepared. As the principal mentor, the sponsor must be intimately involved with the training of the candidate. The sponsor, if not the main instructor, must know in some detail of what is being done for and by the candidate, and should serve as a counselor who reviews all aspects of the candidate's training and progress on a regular basis. A sponsor must not have a conflict of interest with the candidate as viewed by an objective outside observer.

Responsibilities of the Training Institution for the Phase I Examination

Training institutions should provide library resources that include current journals and reference

textbooks commonly used by veterinary pathologists, and access to computerized literature searches. The ACVP does not credential training programs.

If candidates have questions about their training program and its acceptability for training, they can contact the ACVP and the program/arrangement will be assessed on a case by case basis in consultation as needed with one or more of the following depending on the issues: the Credentialing Committee, the ACVP Board of Directors and the Certifying Examination Board.

Sponsor and Training Route Requirements and Definitions

Sponsor

All applications require a sponsor. The sponsor who endorses the application must be the person most responsible for the candidate's training in veterinary pathology. Occasionally, circumstances dictate that a sponsor is not the principal mentor, in which case the ACVP Credentialing Committee and Board of Directors require an explanation/justification at the time of application.

Phase I Examination Sponsors

Phase I examination sponsors do not need to be ACVP, European College of Veterinary Pathology (ECVP) or European College of Veterinary Clinical Pathology (ECVCP) Diplomates if the candidate is training via the Alternate Route for the Phase II examination. However, for the 12 months of Phase I training to be applied to the 36 months of Standard Route Phase II Training, the sponsor must be an ACVP, ECVP, or ECVCP Diplomate, as noted below and in the Phase II handbook.

Phase I Examination Training

For Phase I examination eligibility, candidates must have 12 months of training in veterinary pathology under the direction of a sponsor, as described above. At the time of applying for the Phase I examination, the candidate must declare whether they are training under the Standard Route or Alternate Route of Training for the Phase II Examination. Diplomates certified in either veterinary anatomic pathology or veterinary clinical pathology seeking dual certification are not required to take or repeat the Phase I examination.

Phase II Examination Training

Subsequent to graduation from a veterinary college or school, candidates must be trained in veterinary anatomic pathology if they are seeking certification in veterinary anatomic pathology, and in veterinary clinical pathology if they are seeking certification in veterinary clinical pathology. Candidates must complete training under one of the following program scenarios prior to taking the Certifying Examination:

Standard Route

If a training program, such as a residency in veterinary pathology, is specifically designed to train veterinary anatomic or clinical pathologists as one of its primary functions, and is supervised and directed by an ACVP or ECVCP Diplomate for clinical pathology candidates, or by a Diplomate of the ACVP or ECVP

for anatomic pathology candidates, then training must include at least 36 calendar months of active supervision and direction, primarily in the field which certification is sought (veterinary anatomic pathology or veterinary clinical pathology).

Alternate Route

If a program does not meet the criteria above, then training must consist of at least 48 months of relevant experience in veterinary anatomic or clinical pathology with at least 12 of the 48 months spent under the supervision and direction of an ACVP Diplomate at the same institution and in a program specifically designed to train veterinary pathologists as one of its primary functions.

Dual Certification

Diplomates certified in either veterinary anatomic pathology or veterinary clinical pathology may seek certification in the other discipline. Training must consist of at least 12 months, at the equivalent of 40 hours per week, in the discipline sought. At least 50% of the training must be completed in person with the sponsor who is board certified in the discipline sought. Anatomic pathology sponsors may be either ACVP or ECVP Diplomates, and clinical pathology sponsors may be either ACVP or ECVCP Diplomates. The 12 months of training may be obtained over a period of one to five years and may be either done pre- or post-certification in the first discipline, but should be distinct from the training used toward eligibility requirements in the first discipline.

Eligibility

Credentialing Requirements for Phase I Examinations

ACVP must examine only veterinarians who have a degree necessary for the practice of Veterinary Medicine from a veterinary college in some state, province, territory or possession of the United States or Canada, or from an American Veterinary Medical Association-listed veterinary college.

For all examinations, candidates must provide a photocopy of their veterinary diploma from a college fulfilling the above criteria. Documentation must be in English or include a notarized English translation by an independent translation service.

Criteria to Take Phase I Examination

- A candidate must have completed 12 months of veterinary pathology training as described above prior to the Phase I examination date and must submit a signed approval form from a sponsor (see Application Section below).
- A candidate must complete the online application and pay the Phase I examination fee by the application date.
- A candidate must declare, at the time of application for the Phase I examination, if they will be training under the Standard or Alternate Route for the Phase II examination.

All candidates are required to pass the Phase I examination prior to taking the Phase II examination.

A candidate may elect to take the Phase I and Phase II examinations in the same year if they meet the eligibility requirements for both examinations and pass the Phase I examination prior to taking the Phase

II examination. Candidates intending to take both the Phase I and Phase II examinations in the same year must register for each examination by the respective deadlines. Candidates who do not pass the Phase I examination will have their registration fee for the Phase II examination refunded within 30 days of receiving their Phase I examination results.

Criteria to Repeat Failed Examinations

If a candidate fails the Phase I examination, they are eligible to repeat the examination the following year. There is no limit on the number of attempts or years a candidate may repeat the Phase I examination.

After passing the Phase I examination, candidates will have four attempts over the next nine years to pass the Phase II examination. If a candidate has not passed the Phase II examination after four attempts, or has exceeded their nine-year limit, they must reapply as a new candidate and will be required to retake and pass the Phase I examination prior to retaking the Phase II examination. (NOTE: The Phase II examination was not held in 2020 due to COVID-19. Therefore, 2020 will not count toward the nine-year limit).

The four attempts that a candidate is given to pass the Phase II examination will be calculated as the sum of attempts that occur in Ames (past traditional examination) and Tampa (new examination).

Application

Application Deadlines

Candidates must apply separately for the Phase I and Phase II examinations. Application periods for each examination (the date applications open and the application deadline) are updated yearly on the ACVP website and on the application page. Application deadlines are subject to change from year to year, and candidates should ensure that they check the dates each year in order to meet deadlines.

[Important Examination Dates](#)

The application, Sponsor Verification Form, Terms of Agreement for Admission to the Examination and detailed application steps are available on the application page of the ACVP website.

[Exam Application Page](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requests

The ACVP complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008 (the ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations. If a candidate has a disability or impairment which may require special accommodation(s) to take an examination, they must complete the applicable section of the examination application form.

Accommodation cannot be granted retroactively, so that if a candidate informs ACVP of an impairment or disability after the examination has been completed, there can be no changes made in that candidate's examination results or changes in how that candidate's examination is graded in comparison to other candidates.

To support a request for test accommodations the following materials must be submitted by February 1 of the examination year. The request form and details are found in the links below:

[Test Accommodations Request Form](#)

[ADA Request Information](#)

Application Process and Withdrawal

Candidates pay the examination fee at the time of completing the application. The applicant and sponsor will receive an email message once the Credentialing Committee has reviewed the documentation and approved the applicant to sit for the examination. A recommendation for acceptance, provisional acceptance, or rejection to sit for the examination is made by the Credentialing Committee and is reviewed and approved by the ACVP Board of Directors. A message from the ACVP Executive Office indicating acceptance, provisional acceptance or rejection will follow the ACVP Board of Directors review.

For the Phase I examination, if the applicant's credentials are not accepted, or if a candidate's request to withdraw from the examination is received by the withdrawal deadlines listed on the ACVP website, fees are refunded except for a processing charge. No withdrawal refunds are made after this date and no fees may be carried over to apply in subsequent years.

If a candidate applies for both the Phase I and Phase II examinations and fails the Phase I examination, they will automatically receive a full refund for the Phase II examination. No request for withdrawal from the Phase II examination is necessary for these candidates.

Withdrawal prior to the examination, or failure to appear for the examination, will not constitute an attempt to sit for the examination. A candidate's illness during preparation for, or during the actual examination, will not be considered a valid reason to waive the rules of the College. In the event a candidate starts, but is unable to complete the examination, results will be reported and will constitute an attempt to sit the examination.

Individual candidates accepted to take the examination will be identified only by the unique identification numbers assigned them by the ACVP office until the results of the examination are approved by the ACVP Board of Directors.

ACVP Honor Code for Certifying Examination Candidates

All candidates are expected to accurately represent their credentials. All examinations are taken under an honor system. Candidates are required to read and sign an honor code statement at the time of application and at the time of examination. Test items are copyright protected. If a candidate is found to have misrepresented any portion of their credentials, to have received outside assistance on an examination, to have cheated on an examination, to have misrepresented their work on an examination, to have violated the confidentiality or copyright protection of the examination, or to have behaved unethically in any other way during the credentialing or examination process, their credentials may be rejected, they will receive a failing grade on the examination, they will forfeit fees for the examination, and they will be subject to any other disciplinary action deemed appropriate by the ACVP Council. These actions may include denial of permission to retake the examination in future years and/or denial of the ability to attain certification.

[Honor Code](#)

Preparation, Validation and Scoring of the Phase I Examination

Test items for the Phase I Examination are written and assembled by ACVP Diplomates who are members of the Test Item Writing Group (TIWG) and the Examination Assembly and Administration Group (EAAG), respectively. Members of these groups are selected based on experience, expertise, areas of interest, access to test items and employment sector (academia, diagnostics, industry).

EAAG members prepare the Phase I examination. Test items are selected from the database by the EAAG to produce an examination that is aligned with the ACVP Job Task Analysis and Examination Blueprints (see above). A number of test items with performance established in previous examinations are included for equating purposes (see below).

Grading of multiple choice questions is automated. The computer-generated item analysis, including the discriminatory and difficulty coefficients of each question, is considered by the committee before final determination of candidate scores.

To pass an examination, a score of equal to or greater than the passing point (cut score) must be achieved. The cut score was established by ACVP Diplomates in consultation with a psychometrician via a Standard Setting Study in July 2017 using the Angoff method for multiple choice questions. A panel of ACVP Diplomates reviewed every test item and estimated the percentage of minimally acceptable candidates that will answer the question correctly. These estimates, made independently by each expert, were then combined across all experts and questions to produce the minimally acceptable score. The cut score will remain the same for all future examinations until a new standard setting study is conducted.

In order to ensure that examinations are of comparable difficulty, regardless of the year in which they were administered, an equating process is used to compare the difficulty of examinations given in different years and to adjust scores to reflect any differences in difficulty. These adjusted scores are used to determine if candidates pass or fail the examination based on the pre-established cut score.

Additional information regarding establishment of the cut score and the equating process are available on the ACVP website.

[Cut Scores and Equating](#)

Reporting of Phase I Examination Results

Written notification of the results of the examination will be sent by email to candidates and sponsors within 45 days from the date of the examination.

Scores from Phase I will not be reverified. Results for the automated multiple choice item scoring process are statistically and psychometrically analyzed, and items with specific scoring criteria are assessed and re-analyzed prior to final results being reported.

Appeals

Members and those seeking to gain membership through passing the Certifying Examination may appeal and adverse decision by a College entity. Such decisions may include, but are not limited to, denial of adequacy of credentials prior to examination for Certification, denial of Certification, and cancellation of Membership or Certification by disciplinary action. All appeals will be considered by the ACVP Appeals Committee, whose purpose is to review any decision by the College that adversely affects a person seeking to gain, continue, or reinstate membership in the College, upon the request of eligible persons.

Appeals from candidates for denial to take the Certifying Examination or for denial or cancellation of Certification must be submitted in writing to the ACVP Executive Director within 30 calendar days of such person's notification of the adverse decision being appealed. Appeals must include a statement of justification for the appeal with supporting documentation, if any. When an appeal is received, the Executive Director shall submit the appeal materials to the Chair of the Appeals Committee and to the Chair of the ruling entity that made the original decision. Within 14 days of receiving these materials, the Chair of the ruling entity that made the original decision shall submit any documentation relevant to the appeal and a statement of justification for its original decision to the Appeals Committee Chair. Within 14 days of receiving these additional materials, the Appeals Committee Chair shall convene a meeting of the Appeals Committee to review all documents relevant to the appeal and make a determination as to the validity of the appeal. Within 14 days of this meeting, the Appeals Committee Chair shall submit the results of that determination to the Executive Director who shall inform the appellant of the Appeals Committee's decision. If the appeal is denied, no further appeal procedure shall be undertaken by the College.