



American College of Veterinary Pathologists

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](mailto:exam@acvp.org).  
Questions about the Phase II examination may be addressed to [certification@email.acvp.org](mailto:certification@email.acvp.org).

Updated March 18, 2020

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Policies Procedures, and Requirements</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Contact Information</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Certifying Examination</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Phase I Examination</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Phase I Examination Reading List</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Principal Sources.....	5
Supplemental Sources .....	6
<b>Administration of the Phase I Examination</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Phase II Examination</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Administration of the Phase II Examination</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Anatomic Pathology Reading List</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Principal Sources .....	8
Supplemental Sources.....	8
<b>Anatomic Pathology Scoring and Item Distribution</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Clinical Pathology Reading List</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Principal Sources .....	9
Supplemental Sources.....	9
<b>Clinical Pathology Scoring and Item Distribution</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Responsibilities of Candidates, Sponsors, and Training Institutions</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Responsibilities of the Candidate</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Responsibilities of the Sponsor</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Responsibilities of the Training Institution</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>References for training</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Sponsor and Training Route Requirements and Definitions</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Sponsor</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Phase I Examination Sponsors.....	11
Phase II Examination Sponsors.....	12
<b>Phase I Examination Training</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Phase II Examination Training</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Standard Route.....	12
Alternate Route.....	13
<b><i>Eligibility</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Credentialing Requirements for All Examinations</b> .....	<b>13</b>

Criteria to Take Phase I Examination .....	14
Criteria to Take Phase II Examination .....	14
Criteria to Take Phase II Examination for Dual Certification.....	14
Criteria to Repeat Failed Examinations.....	15
<b><i>Application</i></b> .....	<b>15</b>
Application Deadlines .....	15
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requests.....	15
Application Process and Withdrawal .....	16
<b><i>Reporting of Results and Reverification Requests</i></b> .....	<b>16</b>
Procedure for Reverification After Examination Failure.....	17
Phase I Examination .....	17
Phase II Examination .....	17
<b><i>ACVP Honor Code for Certifying Examination Candidates</i></b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b><i>Appeals</i></b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b><i>Preparation, Validation, and Scoring of the Examinations</i></b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b><i>Maintenance of Certification (MOC)</i></b> .....	<b>19</b>

## Policies Procedures, and Requirements

This document supersedes all previous publications of the American College of Veterinary Pathology (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 American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP) Certifying Examination Candidate Handbook is a resource for trainees, sponsors, mentors and training programs interested in ACVP board certification. The Candidate Handbook 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. The Candidate Handbook is 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 this document. Hyperlinks are provided in the Candidate Handbook to relevant documents on the ACVP website, especially to documents or information that is most likely to be revised from year to year.

## Contact Information

Questions regarding the Phase I ACVP Certifying Examination or eligibility criteria should be sent to [exam@acvp.org](mailto:exam@acvp.org).

Questions regarding the Phase II ACVP Certifying Examination or eligibility criteria should be sent to [certification@email.acvp.org](mailto:certification@email.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. The cut score was established by ACVP Diplomates in consultation with a psychometrician via a Standard Setting Study in July 2017. To pass an examination, a score of equal to or greater than the cut score must be achieved. 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 the Standard Setting Study, cut scores and equating is included in the “Preparation, Validation and Scoring of the Examinations” section below and can also be found on the ACVP website.

### [Important Examination Dates](#)

### [Cut Scores and Equating](#)

## 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, 2019 for the 2020 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.

## [Phase I/Scantron Corporation FAQs](#)

### Phase II Examination

The Phase II examination is a one-day examination in veterinary anatomic pathology or veterinary clinical pathology. The examination is composed of written essays and multiple-choice questions that assess the skills and knowledge that a minimally competent pathologist should possess. More detail regarding the organization and composition of the examination can be found on the ACVP website.

## [Examination Content Development Guidelines](#)

## [Job Task Analysis Anatomic Pathology Blueprint](#)

## [Job Task Analysis Clinical Pathology Blueprint](#)

Although the Phase II Examination cannot be passed in parts, candidates who fail the examination will be provided feedback on how they performed on each section of the examination.

The Phase II examination dates are updated on the ACVP website. The passing point (cut score) for the Phase II Anatomic Pathology Examination is 194/300. The cut score for the Phase II Clinical Pathology Examination is 203/300. Cut scores were established by ACVP Diplomates in consultation with a psychometrician via a Standard Setting Study in July 2017. To pass an examination, a score of equal to or greater than the cut score must be achieved. 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 the Standard Setting Study, cut scores and equating is included in the “Preparation, Validation and Scoring of the Examinations” section below.

[Important Examination Dates](#)

[Cut Scores and Equating](#)

## Administration of the Phase II Examination

The Phase II examination is administered at the American Board of Pathology (ABP) testing facility in Tampa, Florida. The facility is located 5 miles (10 minutes) from the Tampa International Airport and is connected to the Westshore Grand Hotel. Additional information regarding the Tampa ABP Examination Center, including a visual guide to the examination center, computer examination instructions, computer examination instruction screens, and general information such as breaks, scratch paper, items not allowed in the testing room and the honor code can be found on the ACVP website.

[Tampa Guide/FAQs](#)

## Anatomic Pathology 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 articles published within the last five years but note that only articles in print or electronically released by January 1st of the examination year are considered for that year’s examination. For textbooks, candidates should utilize a recent version that is representative of current pathology knowledge.

## Principal Sources

- Maxie MG. Jubb, Kennedy and Palmer's Pathology of Domestic Animals
- Zachary JF. Pathologic Basis of Veterinary Disease
- Latimer KS. Duncan and Prasse's Veterinary Laboratory Medicine
- Veterinary Pathology
- Journal of Comparative Pathology
- Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation
- Clinical pathology atlas (examples include Raskin RE, Meyer DJ. Canine and Feline Cytology or Valenciano AC, Cowell RL. Diagnostic Cytology and Hematology of the Dog and Cat).

## Supplemental Sources

- Terio K, McAloose D, St. Leger J. Pathology of Wildlife and Zoo Animals.
- Percy DH, Barthold SW. Pathology of Laboratory Rodents and Rabbits
- Noga EJ. Fish Disease: Diagnosis and Treatment (Chapters 4, 5, 7-15)
- Abee C, Mansfield K, Tardif S, Morris T. Non-Human Primates in Biomedical Research: Diseases (2012, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15)
- Fox JG, Marini RP. Biology and Diseases of the Ferret (2014; Chapters 14-24)
- Avian Disease Manual. Am Assoc Avian Pathol
- Toxicologic Pathology (review articles)

## Anatomic Pathology Scoring and Item Distribution

Session	Items	Points/Item	Approximate Contribution to Final Score
Microscopy (slides)	12	20	33%
Interpretation MCQ	100	1	33%
Knowledge MCQ	100	1	33%
MCQ = Multiple choice question			

### Species Distribution

- 50 – 70% Domestic
- 20 – 30% Laboratory animal
- 10 – 20% Non-domestic

### Interpretation MCQ Distribution

- 50 – 70% Gross images
- 20 – 50% Microscopic images (histology, immunohistochemistry [IHC], electron microscopy [EM], cytopathology, hematology)
- 0 – 10% clinical pathology/data items

### Microscopic Essay Point Distribution

- 50 – 80% Description
- 20 – 50% Interpretation

## [Scope of the ACVP Certifying Examination \(Phase II\) – Anatomic Pathology](#)



## Clinical Pathology 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 articles published with the last five years but note that only articles in print or electronically released by January 1st of the examination year are considered for that year's examination. For textbooks, candidates should utilize a recent version that is representative of current pathology knowledge.

### Principal Sources

- Stockham SL, Scott MA. Fundamentals of Veterinary Clinical Pathology
- DiBartola SP. Fluid, Electrolyte and Acid-Base Disorders (Sections I, II, III)
- Raskin RE, Meyer DJ. Canine and Feline Cytology
- Valenciano AC, Cowell RL. Diagnostic Cytology and Hematology of the Dog and Cat
- Weiss DJ, Wardrop KJ. Schalm's Veterinary Hematology
- Veterinary Clinical Pathology

### Supplemental Sources

- Cowell RL, Tyler RD. Diagnostic Cytology and Hematology of the Horse
- Kaneko JJ, et al. Clinical Biochemistry of Domestic Animals
- Osborne CA, Stevens JB. Urinalysis: A Clinical Guide to Compassionate Patient Care
- Thrall MA. Veterinary Hematology and Clinical Chemistry (Nondomestic animal chapters)
- Campbell TW, Ellis CK. Avian and Exotic Animal Hematology and Cytology
- Veterinary Pathology
- Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association
- Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine

## Clinical Pathology Scoring and Item Distribution

Session	Items	Points/Item	Approximate Contribution to Final Score
Essays – Glass slides (Microscopy)	10	20	26%
Essays	2	30	8%
Interpretation MCQ	100	1	33%
Knowledge MCQ	100	1	33%
MCQ = Multiple choice question			

### Species Distribution

- 70 – 80% Domestic
- 10 – 20% Laboratory animal
- 5 – 10% Non-domestic

#### Essays - Glass Slides

- 40 – 50% Cytology
- 30 – 40% Hematology
- 10 – 20% Bone marrow (cytology or histology)
- 0 – 10% Histology Microscopic Essay Point Distribution
- 50 – 80% Description
- 20 – 50% Interpretation

### [Scope of the ACVP Certifying Examination \(Phase II\) – Clinical Pathology](#)

## 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 specimens for diagnosis and interpretation, textbooks, 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 Council 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 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

The training should include daily participation in, and responsibility for, some portion(s) of pathology service, teaching, or research. The training should offer academic studies designed to provide adequate understanding of the basic principles of pathology and provide facilities and case materials for the trainee to gain practical experience in performing professional duties. These should include the application of all standard methods and procedures of pathology to any given case, to demonstrate the pathogenesis and cause of the existing disease process and make a diagnosis. For veterinary anatomic pathology, this usually relates to performance and

interpretation of gross, histologic, histochemical, immunohistochemical, molecular biological and ultrastructural examinations, and correlating results with clinical findings and clinical laboratory data. For veterinary clinical pathology, this usually relates to interpretation of hematologic, cytologic, biochemical, immunological and molecular biological examinations of blood, urine, body fluids, and other specimens obtained from the animal, as well as histologic evaluation of surgical biopsy specimens. Interpretation includes correlating test results with clinical findings. While the pathologist need not be technically proficient in the performance of laboratory procedures, thorough familiarity with the methods, uses, limitations, and applications of such tests, and the ability to supervise the performance of these procedures, and interpret the results are required. Training institutions should provide library resources that include current journals and reference textbooks commonly used by veterinary pathologists, and access to computerized literature searches. In addition, archival case materials or organized study sets containing case materials should be available. 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 Council, and the Certifying Examination Board.

## References for training

- Elements of Good Training in Anatomic Pathology, Vet Pathol 47: 995-1002, 2010.
- Guidelines for resident training in veterinary clinical pathology: I. Clinical chemistry. Vet Clin Pathol 32:202-208, 2003.
- Guidelines for resident training in veterinary clinical pathology: II. Hematology. Vet Clin Pathol 35:382-387, 2006.
- Guidelines for resident training in veterinary clinical pathology. III: cytopathology and surgical pathology. Vet Clin Pathol 38:281-287, 2009

## 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 Council require an explanation/justification at the time of application.

### Phase I Examination Sponsors

Phase I examination sponsors do not need to be ACVP or ECVP 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 Diplomate (or ECVP Diplomate as noted below for Phase II sponsors).

## Phase II Examination Sponsors

Phase II examination sponsors must be an ACVP Diplomate (or an ECVP Diplomate as noted below). The Diplomate must have membership in good standing with their college and have been a Diplomate for at least the period of claimed sponsorship (generally 3 years or more).

- Anatomic pathology Diplomates of the ECVP, who were elected to the ECVP by examination, may act as sponsors for anatomic pathology candidates. Only ACVP clinical pathology Diplomates may act as sponsors for clinical pathology candidates for the Phase II examination.
- For Alternate Route Training, in which the principal mentor is not a Diplomate, co- sponsorship by a Diplomate must be obtained, which signifies that the training has been reviewed for adequacy and is consistent with the requirements of the College.

## 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 (Phase I Examination Sponsor). 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 Diplomate for clinical pathology candidates, or by a Diplomate of the ACVP or European College of Veterinary Pathology (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 ACVP certified (or ECVF certified for anatomic pathology) in the discipline sought. 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 All Examinations

Candidates must have graduated from a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), must possess a certificate issued by the Education Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) or Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education or Equivalence (PAVE®) or be legally qualified to practice veterinary medicine in some state, province, territory or possession of the United States, Canada or other country.

For all examinations, candidates must provide one of the following documents as part of the application:

- A photocopy of a diploma from an AVMA-accredited school or college of veterinary medicine
- A photocopy of an Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) or Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education equivalence (PAVE®) certificate
- A photocopy of a state, provincial or territory license to practice veterinary medicine (United States, Canada or other country)
- A photocopy of a faculty license or other umbrella license from their institution
- A document stating that a license to practice is not required in their position at their institution
  - This option will require a copy of the candidate's diploma from any veterinary school or college in addition to documentation that a license is not required for the candidate's job, state, province or country.

**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 on-line 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.

## Criteria to Take 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 Phase II.
- **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.
- A candidate must have completed 36 months (Standard Route) or 48 months (Alternate Route) of veterinary pathology training prior to the Phase II examination date and must have a signed approval form from a sponsor.
- A candidate must complete the on-line application and pay the Phase II examination fee by the application date.

## Criteria to Take Phase II Examination for Dual Certification

Candidates seeking dual certification must adhere to the following training requirements prior to attempting the relevant certification examination:

- Twelve months, at the equivalent of 40 hours per week, of training under the mentorship of an ACVP Diplomate (or ECVP Diplomate for anatomic pathology) who is certified in the discipline sought.
- 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. A minimum of 50% of the training time should be in person with the ACVP (or ECVP) certified Diplomate (mentor).
- Following the training, the ACVP (or ECVP) certified Diplomate will sign the sponsorship form attesting to the readiness to attempt the certification examination (testable competencies) and training and mastery of non-testable competencies.
- For dual certification eligibility, one must be boarded in one discipline before applying for the Phase II examination in the second discipline (necessitating Phase II testing in separate years for anatomic pathology and clinical pathology) except in a case where a candidate meets full eligibility requirements for both disciplines in the same examination year (if a candidate had both 36/48 months of training in anatomic pathology and 36/48 months of training in clinical pathology, met other eligibility requirements, and wished to apply for and take both Phase II examinations in the same year; i.e. 2-day period).

## 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.
- 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 for either or both the Phase I and II examinations. 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 filling out 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 Council. A message from the ACVP Executive Office indicating acceptance, provisional acceptance or rejection will follow the ACVP Council review.

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 Council.

## Reporting of Results and Reverification Requests

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



## Procedure for Reverification After Examination Failure

### Phase I 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.

### Phase II Examination

The automated multiple choice item scoring process for the Phase II examination is subject to similar quality assurance as the Phase I examination, and scores will not be reverified. Essay scores from the Phase II examination are verified twice before examination scores are reported. If a candidate requests essay score reverification after receiving their score, the essays are not regraded, but score transfers and final score are reverified. Requests for reverification must be accompanied by a fee and must be received by the ACVP Executive Office within 30 days of the receipt of test results.

### [Reverification of Examination Scores](#)

## 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](#)

## Appeals

Adverse decisions by ACVP that may be appealed include, but are not limited to, denial of credentials to take the examination, denial of certification due to failure of examination and cancellation of certification by disciplinary action. All appeals will be considered by the ACVP Appeals Committee, whose sole responsibility is to determine whether proper procedures were followed by the ACVP Council, Secretary/Treasurer, Executive Director, Credentialing

Committee, or the Certifying Exam Board in making decisions that may be considered adverse by a Diplomate or candidate for certification.

Appeals from candidates for denial to take the examination or for denial or cancellation of certification must be submitted in writing to the ACVP Executive Director. Appeals should consist of a brief letter summarizing the reason for the appeal along with any supporting documents. Appeals, including all supporting documents, must be received from the candidate by the ACVP within 30 calendar days of the candidate's final notification by ACVP of the decision being appealed. Candidates must redact all supporting documents to retain anonymity of the appellant and ACVP members who may be involved in the case. When an appeal is received, the Secretary/Treasurer or 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 30 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 30 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 30 days of this meeting, the Appeals Chair shall submit the results of that determination to the Secretary/Treasurer or 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.

Reverification of scores after failure of the Phase II examination is a different process (see above).

## Preparation, Validation, and Scoring of the Examinations

Test items for Phase I and Phase II Examinations 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). There are separate TIWGs and EAAGs for anatomic pathology and clinical pathology.

The TIWG composes or submits test items for consideration for the microscopic and essay section of the examination. Submitted test items are reviewed for difficulty, accuracy, clarity, and relevance. Following a rigorous review process, test items are entered into a database for use on subsequent examinations. Each item in the database is accompanied by metadata, including Job Task Analysis and Examination Blueprint Categories and performance data from previous examinations. This information is used by EAAG members when assembling an examination.

EAAG members prepare the Phase I examination and the veterinary anatomic pathology and veterinary clinical pathology Phase II examinations. 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. Microscopic and case essays are graded using grading keys. All responses to a given case are assigned to one individual to ensure uniformity of grading.

During the entire examination process, candidates are identified only by number. Scoring calculations are checked at least twice before they are accepted as final. Individuals grading the examination never learn the names of candidates that correspond to candidate numbers.

The passing point (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, and the Extended Angoff method for written responses (glass slide descriptions and essays). For both methods, a panel of ACVP Diplomates reviewed every test and estimated the percentage of minimally acceptable candidates that will answer the question correctly (Angoff method) or the number of points a minimally acceptable candidate will earn for each description or essay (Extended Angoff method). These estimates, made independently by each expert, were then combined across all experts and questions to produce the minimally acceptable score.

To pass an examination, a score of equal to or greater than the cut score must be achieved. 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](#)

## Maintenance of Certification (MOC)

All veterinary specialties recognized by the AVMA, including the ACVP, are required to implement a mandatory program for maintenance of certification (MOC). The MOC program for ACVP Diplomates certified in 2016 and thereafter have time-stamped certificates which expire every 10 years. Regular documentation of defined continuing education and scholarly activities, maintenance of professional proficiency, and efforts in professional organizations are required for renewal. The MOC web-based portal is designed to efficiently facilitate ACVP members in maintaining their certification. The interface, accessible through the ACVP website, allows members to clearly communicate, track, and report MOC credit activities according to the basic guidelines delineated by the AVMA.