



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 may be addressed to exam@ACVP.org

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Eligibility

Credentialing Requirements for All Examinations

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 your position at your institution
***Update:** This option has been since clarified to be an option for candidates who do not have a diploma from an AVMA-accredited institution, ECFVG certification, or a license to practice veterinary medicine. 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 an English translation by an independent translation service that is notarized.

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

For the 2018-2019 examination cycles, candidates for dual certification (i.e. a candidate that is ACVP certified in one of the two disciplines: clinical pathology or anatomic pathology) can sponsor themselves when applying to take the ACVP certification examination in the second discipline.

Effective in 2020, candidates for 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 Diplomat 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 (i.e. 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 AP and CP) except in a case where a candidate meets full eligibility requirements for both disciplines in the same examination year (e.g., 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 (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 (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 Examinations 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 you have a disability or impairment which may require special accommodation(s) to take an examination, you 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 Requests](#)

Application Process and Withdrawal

Once an application is received, candidates will receive an email invoice for the fee payment. This message does not constitute acceptance to sit the examination. The applicant and Sponsor will receive an email message once the Credentialing Committee has reviewed the documentation and approve the applicant to sit for the examination. A recommendation for acceptance, provisional acceptance, or rejection to sit the examination is made by the Credentialing Committee and is reviewed and approved by ACVP Council. A message from the ACVP Executive Office indicating acceptance, provisional acceptance or rejection will follow 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, he/she 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 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 Reverification

The automated multiple choice item scoring process for the Phase II examination is subject to similar quality assurance as 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, which the candidates are required to read and sign 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 their 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, the Test Item Writing Group or the Exam Assembly and Administration Group 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

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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 thirty (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 adverse decision. Within thirty (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 thirty (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 thirty (30) days of this meeting, the Appeals Chair shall submit the results of that determination to the Secretary/Treasurer or the Executive Director of 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 Exam Assembly and Administration Group (EAG), 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 EAGs 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 EAG members when assembling an examination.

EAG members prepare the Phase I examination and the Veterinary Anatomic Pathology and Veterinary Clinical Pathology Phase II examinations. Test items are selected from the data bank by the EAG 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 a grading key. 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 (i.e. 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.

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