ACVPM Examination Committee
Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
Update February 28, 2012

I. Membership:

A. The Examinations Committee will consist of 6 members (5 subject matter experts [SME] and the Chair). The ACVPM Executive Vice President (EVP) is an ex-officio member.

B. There will be one SME for each of the following subject areas:

1. Environmental Health
2. Epidemiology & Biostatistics
3. Food Safety
4. Infectious & Parasitic Diseases
5. Public Health Administration & Education

C. Members will serve a term not to exceed 6 years. According to the ACVPM Bylaws, the most senior committee member serves as committee chairperson. The second-most senior person serves as the vice-chair of the committee. For the 2012 Examination, the order of committee seniority with year appointed is:

1. McCluskey (06) – Chair
2. Funk (07) – Environmental Health SME, Vice Chair
3. Feldman (08) – Public Health Administration SME
4. Hildabrand (09) – Food Safety SME
5. Berghaus (10) – Epidemiology/Biostatistics SME
   Executive Vice President- McCall (ex officio)

D. The Committee may use additional ACVPM subject matter experts as needed to help administer and grade exams and write questions when a regular Examination Committee member becomes unavailable.

II. Roles and Responsibilities:

A. The Committee Chair:

1. Assumes the duties of Chair at the conclusion of the annual general membership meeting and relinquishes the duties at the close of the general membership meeting the following year.
2. Schedules and conducts all meetings, VTCs, or teleconferences and assigns tasks that must be accomplished throughout the year.
3. Establishes and executes appropriate policies and procedures to ensure security of the test database and the actual examination.
4. Ensures the board certification examination is comprehensive, valid, reliable, legally defensible, and is administered in an appropriate testing environment.

5. Nominates replacement SMEs to the ACVPM president after consultation with the committee members; Drafts appointment letter to be signed and sent by the President. Provides appropriate background and committee information including the SOP to the appointee.

6. Ensures all SME responsibilities for the appropriate subject matter area are accomplished in the absence of a designated SME.

7. Completes a committee report and presents the report and test results to the ACVPM Executive Board during the annual meeting.

8. Ensures all open issues are tracked to closure.

9. Works with the EVP in preparing for and proctoring the examination.

10. Answers post-exam inquiries from unsuccessful candidates by drafting the response to the candidate with a copy to the EVP.

11. Recommends to the President, after consultation with the committee members and the EVP, the removal of committee members who are unable to fulfill the duties of SME in a satisfactory manner or who are unresponsive to repeated requests to complete committee assignments.

12. Safeguards all databases and sensitive examination materials; such items must remain in the control of the Chair and not delegated to secretaries, assistants, graduate students, or colleagues.

B. The Vice-Chair will:

1. In the absence of, or lack of response from the Chair, accomplish the responsibilities of the Chair as well as function as a SME.

2. Works with the EVP and Chair in preparing for and proctoring the examination.

3. Perform other duties as requested by the Committee Chair.

C. The SMEs are responsible for:

1. Reviewing, updating, referencing and validating their multiple-choice test database on at least an annual basis.

2. Annually reviewing and approving all new multiple choice questions, and providing their recommendations (keep, drop, modify, move to another section) to the EVP within the designated timeframe.

3. Assigning a category designator to each new question added to the database.

4. Generating at least 5 new multiple choice questions for the database each year.

5. Annually developing a problem solving question for the essay portion of the exam and presenting it in draft form at the Exam Committee meeting. Each SME must also finalize their draft after the meeting and return it to EVP when designated.

6. Reviewing and approving their portion of the draft multiple-choice exam prior to the annual examination. All changes must be submitted to the EVP within the time frame set by the Committee Chair.
7. Attending all Exam Committee meetings, VTCs, and teleconferences and voting on various committee issues.
8. Safeguarding all databases and sensitive examination materials; such items must remain in the control of the SME and not delegated to secretaries, assistants, graduate students, or colleagues.
9. Assisting with proctoring and administration of the exam as needed at the discretion of the chair.
10. Annually review and update candidate Study References document.

D. The ACVPM Executive Vice President (EVP) will serve in an ex-officio capacity and will:

1. Provide administrative support to the activities of the Examinations Committee.
2. Maintain the examination database and historical files.
3. Prepare the examination materials for the annual examination.
4. Arrange for an appropriate examination facility.
5. Proctor the examination and support the Committee Chair.
6. Prepare and provide to the Committee Chair an annual financial report of the expenses associated with the Examinations Committee.
7. In the case of a post-exam inquiry from an unsuccessful candidate, retrieve documents and scores pertinent to the inquiry and forward the information to the Chair.
8. Other duties as requested by the Committee Chair and approved by the ACVPM President.

III. Examination Procedures:

A. General:

1. The ACVPM board examination will be based on the following premises:

   a. Relevance of the content of the exam (i.e. are we asking the right questions?)
   b. Sound processes that ensure confidentiality, legal propriety and defensibility.

2. Frequency, scheduling, and location of examinations:

   a. There will be only one ACVPM board certification examination each year.
   b. The examination test date will be scheduled to allow adequate time to review, tabulate, and validate examination results prior to reporting results to the Executive Committee.
   c. The 2012 examination will be given at the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine in Columbus, Ohio, on June 14-15, 2012. With the availability of the computer laboratory at this location, the essay section can be composed on word processors.
B. Facility and equipment requirements:

1. Facility criteria (at a minimum):
   a. The rooms shall be large enough to comfortably accommodate the total number of candidates. Access to the test environment must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
   b. Ample bathrooms should be conveniently located and water and soft drinks will be made available.
   c. The exam rooms shall remain free of distractions and objectionable noise from other activities. Proctors will only answer candidate questions outside the exam rooms so as not to distract others.
   d. Headsets and iPods or other electronic devices will not be allowed. Simple non-programmable calculators may be allowed subject to approval of exam proctors.

2. Equipment and supplies for the exam administrators:
   a. Copy machine nearby for copying test answer sheets
   b. FedEx pickup point nearby – won’t be needed in Columbus
   c. FAX for receiving test results - won’t be needed in Columbus

C. Candidates will use Windows-based personal computers supplied by the College for composing the essay section of the exam. Microsoft WORD will be the word-processing software. Candidates wishing to hand-write their compositions must submit their request to the EVP within 15 days of receiving the test instructions.

D. For persons with documented pre-existing disabilities, reasonable accommodations will be considered by the EVP in consultation with the Chair of the Examination Committee when requested by the candidate within 15 days of receiving test instructions.

IV. The ACVPM Certifying Examination:

A. General:

1. The exam is divided into two sections: multiple choice and essay. A candidate must pass both sections to be eligible for certification.
   a. The essay questions will be given on the first day.
   b. The multiple choice exam will be given on the second day.

2. To be eligible for certification, an applicant must successfully complete both sections of the examination within 3 years from the date the credentials committee approved the candidate to sit for the examination. This 3-year period includes both retakes and deferments. Any section of the exam failed on the first attempt can be retaken only once using the initial credentials committee
application approval. If not completed during this 3-year period, all portions of the credentialing, exam, and full fee payment must be repeated. The Chair of the Examination Committee can make exceptions in unusual cases if so petitioned by the candidate.

3. Some candidates defer taking the examination when first approved. A maximum of two deferments (years) are permitted with the original application. If more than 3 years have elapsed between the original application approval and sitting the examination, the candidate must complete a new application and the candidate must pay an additional 25% of the application fee in effect when the candidate reschedules to take the examination.

4. If a candidate decides not to take the exam on the date scheduled, the candidate must notify the EVP as early as possible but at least 30 days prior to the examination date. In extreme cases, a deferral less than 30 days prior to the examination date will be considered by the EVP in consultation with the Examination Committee Chair. If the EVP is not notified, the candidate will be considered a “no-show.” In the case of “no-shows,” the College will keep the application fee, and the candidate must pay an additional 50% of the application fee in effect when the candidate reschedules to take the examination.

B. Review and validation of multiple choice questions

1. The EVP will forward a copy of the existing multiple choice database to each SME when directed by the Chair. Note: The College is migrating to a secure, on-line test question database.

2. The SME will review annually the multiple choice questions in their designated area of expertise and make necessary corrections.

3. The SME will assign each question to one of 10 (or fewer) categories. This information will be used to determine which categories need more database questions and to ensure each category is equally represented on the examination.

   a. Each SME will provide the EVP and Chair with their list of subcategories and the sources on which they are based. Current categories include:

   3. Environmental health
   5. Public Health Administration & Education: ACVPM Ad hoc committee of 1999-2000
b. Subcategories, once established, should remain the same from year-to-year, if possible. They can be changed only with the approval of the majority of the committee.

4. The SME will submit their multiple choice question recommendations and revisions by the deadline established by the Chair.

5. The SME will conduct final review and validation of the database during the time period established by the Chair.

C. Creating the multiple-choice test.

1. The Chair will use the following criteria to create the multiple choice portion of the examination each year from the validated database:

a. The test will consist of 300 multiple-choice questions.
b. The subject area distribution will be as follows:

   1. Epidemiology & Biostatistics: 60 questions
   2. Infectious & Parasitic Diseases: 60 questions
   3. Food Safety: 60 questions
   4. Environmental Health: 60 questions
   5. Public Health Administration & Education: 60 questions

2. The SMEs will select 60 questions for the multiple choice test from each subject area question database. To the extent possible, questions will be selected equally from the categories within each area of subject matter expertise.

3. The chair will send the compiled 300 questions to the committee for final review for redundancy and clarity.

D. Administering and grading the multiple choice test.

1. The multiple-choice test will be given on the second day of the examination period.

   a. Candidate registration will begin at 7:15am. Candidates will present a government-issued picture ID card at the time they place their signature on the sign-in roster.
   b. Instructions to candidates will begin at 7:40 am.
   c. The examination will begin at 8:00am.
   d. The examination ends at 2:00 pm.

2. The following procedures will be used for machine grading of the multiple choice exam. (NOTE: These procedures are standardized currently with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ohio State University. The Examination
Committee may need to re-address/revise these procedures if a different testing site is chosen.)

a. After making a copy of each answer sheet, the EVP will forward originals of test answer sheets to the Director, Educational Design and Systems (EDS), OSU College of Veterinary Medicine.
b. The EVP will make sure that the Director or his designated assistant receives the test sheets.
c. The EDS Director will supervise the computer grading of the test answer sheets (NOTE: Educational Resources will maintain positive control of ACVPM test answer sheets at all times) and forward the results back to the Exam Committee Chair and/or EVP immediately thereafter along with the list of questions which require review for problems.
d. The Chair, Vice Chair, and EVP will review the results, make adjustments (as needed) to remove any inappropriate questions and give instructions for changes to EDS director immediately upon completion of their review. Any questions that are thrown out will be shared with the SME’s so that they can make adjustments to the database for subsequent years.
e. EDS will make the changes and recalculate the scores based on the changes. The adjusted scores will immediately be sent back to the ACVPM test site.
f. The test sheets will be secured by EDS until returned to the EVP or the EVP’s designee (e.g., on-site diplomate who serves as exam coordinator).

3. The procedure for determining a passing grade on the multiple-choice test is as follows: The numerator (number of original correct answers) will be divided by the adjusted denominator (number of questions remaining after “problem” questions have been removed). To pass the multiple choice portion of the exam, a candidate must achieve at least a 50% score (\(>0.4950\)) in each of the five subject areas AND at least a 70% score (\(>0.6950\)) in three of the five subject areas.

4. The process for handling questions identified by candidates as problematic is as follows:

a. If a question is identified as problematic by a candidate during the test, and it is due to a typing error or misspelling that is easily clarified, the test proctor will announce the correction to all of the candidates during the test. (These can be displayed using means visible to candidates).
b. Questions identified as problematic by applicants on critiques will be reviewed AFTER grading.

1. In the initial instruction to candidates at the beginning of the session, candidates will be instructed to note problematic questions (with an explanation of why the question is problematic) on the critique sheet.
2. The appropriate SME in consultation with the Chair reviews the problematic question(s) and determines if it should be removed from the database.
E. Administering and grading the essay test.

1. General information: This section consists of five detailed knowledge questions, one from each of the 5 areas of expertise. Topics must:

   a. Be pertinent to veterinary preventive medicine.
   b. Have been addressed or indexed in at least one of the references listed in paragraph E.2. during the 36 months prior to May 1st of the examination year. NOTE: This does NOT mean that all information needed to answer the given ACVPM essay question is fully addressed in the one of these references.
   c. Evaluate candidate ability to communicate their answers clearly and logically. All parts of each essay question must be communicated clearly with correct grammar, spelling and complete sentences. At least one question in each subject area/SME essay will specifically evaluate candidate ability to communicate an issue to the public, a regulator, elected officials, or the media.


3. Prior to the February meeting, each SME creates the question for their area of expertise using the following criteria:

   a. The essay question for each area of expertise will be worth 20 total points.
   b. Format:
      1. State the question; include the number of points to be given for each sub-question, if applicable.
      2. Provide correct answers on a separate sheet.
      3. Provide references.

4. The essay portion of the test is given on the first day.

   a. Candidate registration will begin at 7:15am. Candidates will present a government-issued picture ID card at the time they place their signature on the sign-in roster.
   b. Instructions to candidates will begin at 7:40 am.
   c. The examination will begin at 8:00am. Candidates are given 6 hours to complete all portions of the essay exam (so if the exam begins at exactly 8:00 am, the examination period ends at 2:00pm). All candidates will sign-out when they turn in their test materials.
5. Grading:

a. Each of the questions will be worth 20 points.
b. Each SME will receive grade tally sheets prepared by the chair for their question which lists maximum point scores for each area to be graded.
c. Copies of each essay will be forwarded by email or overnight delivery to the SME and secondary grader immediately following the exam. Between the exam and the July meeting each grader will complete grading their exams and submit the grading tally sheets to the Chair. They will each bring graded copies (electronic or paper) of their exams to the July meeting.
d. To pass the Subject Matter Expertise (essay) portion of the exam, a candidate must achieve at least a 50% score (≥0.4950) in each of the five subject areas AND at least a 70% score (≥0.6950) in three of the five subject areas.
e. Each SME will grade the candidates’ responses to their own question.
f. Each SME also will grade a second question to be determined at the spring meeting.
   1. If the scores of the two graders vary by more than 3 points, and one is passing and one is failing, the question will be scored by a tertiary grader.
   2. If a tertiary grader is necessary for any question, one of the SMEs who has not previously graded the question will be assigned by the Examination Committee Chair to act as the tertiary grader.
   3. For 2012, the secondary graders are:
      - Epidemiology SME is secondary grader for Environmental Health
      - Infectious Disease SME is secondary grader for Food Safety
      - Food Safety SME is secondary grader for Public Health
      - Environmental Health SME is secondary grader for Epidemiology
      - Public Health SME is secondary grader for Infectious Disease

g. The score the candidate receives on a question is the average of the two highest scores.
h. The number of points deducted and the reason for the point deduction (the deficiency) must be noted on the copy of the candidate’s answer sheet by each grader.
i. The grader must ensure the score on the tally sheet matches the score indicated on the copy of the candidate’s response.

F. The numerical scores awarded to each candidate in each part of the examination by each grader will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet for the purpose of calculating their overall scores and pass/fail status. The spreadsheet is maintained by the Chair, Vice Chair, and EVP.

G. The Examination Committee believes that every procedural caution should be taken to insure that no administrative errors occur in the transfer of information regarding examinee pass/fail status from the Examination Committee Chair to the Executive Board, the EVP, and subsequently to the candidate.
H. Only the EVP, through the official letters of notification to each of the candidates, is to divulge the results of an individual’s performance on the examination. The identities of the candidates are never revealed to the Examination Committee during the process of grading. Once the letters have been distributed, the Examination Committee Chair and the EVP may respond to inquiries from candidates. The Chair will report the group statistics to the Executive Board as soon as the results are available.

V. Financial Report:

The Executive Vice President will prepare a current budget (including travel/lodging/costs for all committee members to attend the committee offsite, the examination meeting, and any required VTCs/teleconferences) and projected financial needs assessment (including any costs required to implement changes to testing/evaluation procedures). The financial report will be included in the committee report and submitted to the ACVPM Executive Board for review/approval annually.

VI. Document review:

The committee will review/approve the following ACVPM documents at the February meeting each year:

1. “About the Exam” document on ACVPM website
2. “ACVPM Study References”
3. Instructions for the ACVPM Board Certifying Exam
4. Notification letter of pass/fail (reviewed at Results Exam Committee meeting)
5. “ACVPM Examination Committee Meeting Minutes” (NOTE: Review OPEN items from the previous year’s minutes)
6. ACVPM Examination Committee SOP

VII. Annual Schedule of Required Committee Actions:

The Committee Chair and Executive Vice President will prepare an itemized schedule of required actions, including deadlines, to enhance committee member preparedness for the Pre-Examination and Examination meetings. General guidelines are:

September 1st:

a. Chair sends reminder to SMEs to review their multiple choice question database.
b. Chair distributes the existing study reference list to each SME for review and updating by Oct 1st (Are the references available and the most current? Is there duplication and can the list be shortened?)

November 1st:

a. SMEs complete their review of the existing multiple choice question pool
b. Each SME enters 5 new questions in the database.

c. If not previously determined, the Exam committee chair sets date and place for the February Meeting. Chair also reminds committee members to start drafting essay questions.

February 1st: Each SME will submit their draft essay question to the Chair and Exam Committee members so that it can be reviewed before the February meeting and then discussed at the meeting.

February: Exam committee meeting.

April 10th: SME complete selection of 60 questions for their area and sends those questions to Chair for compilation. SME also completes final essay question with answer key and submits to Chair.

May 1st: Chair completes review and compilation of 60 of the questions from each SME and sends the edited 300 question list to each SME for review for redundancy and clarity.

May 5th: SMEs complete review of all questions.

May 15th: Chair ensures completion of the final 300 question exam with the proper final formatting.

June 14-15, 2012: Exam is administered in Columbus, Ohio.

July 16, 2011: Exam Committee Results meeting.

July 19, 2011: Committee Chair submits committee report to the Executive Board.

Annual AVMA meeting : Committee Chair gives an oral report and update of activities (number of examinees) since the written report was submitted at both the Executive Board and the General Membership meetings. Select a tentative date/location for the February meeting.

Within 45 days of exam completion: Candidates are notified of results.