

Exam Format and Pass Marks - ECVSMR

June 2019

Requirements for Board Certification

Standards for admission to membership: The College will only certify veterinarians who:

- a. Have demonstrated fitness and ability to practise the speciality by meeting the established training and experience requirements and by attaining acceptable scores on comprehensive examinations administered by the College.
- b. Have demonstrated satisfactory moral and ethical standing in the profession.
- c. Practise scientific, evidence-based veterinary medicine, which complies with animal welfare legislation.
- d. Have gained their veterinary degree at least 48 months previously.

Policy on Examination Procedure

Fulfilment of objectives of the residency is monitored by several means: Continuous assessment of candidate performance, other requirements incorporated in the residency programme such as case reports, publications and presentations and lastly by a summative written examination, after the resident's credentials have been approved. This examination will be carried out in accordance with the EBVS policy on examination procedures.

Candidates who apply to sit the exam are automatically declaring themselves "fit to sit".

Candidates may withdraw based on extenuating circumstances by informing the college secretary. If a candidate feels unwell during the examination process, he/she should immediately notify the Chairperson of the Examination Committee. Failure to appear at an exam or aborting an exam without extenuating circumstances counts as exam attempt.

Candidates sitting the examination for the first time must take all three (3) parts. Candidates sitting the examination for the second, third or fourth time must take all parts not successfully completed previously. All three (3) parts of the examination must be successfully completed to become certified by the ECVSMR. After being accepted to sit the examination, the candidate has a total of four (4) attempts to pass all three parts of the examination within (eight) 8 years. Candidates who pass all parts of the examination will be issued a certificate indicating that they are a Diplomate of the ECVSMR.

Validation of credentials and application to sit the exam

The resident must submit his/her credentials to the Credentials Committee within eighteen months of completion of the residency (see Bylaws). The minimum number of training programme months must have been completed before the candidate sits the examination.

All candidates intending to submit their credentials for approval and/or to sit the qualifying examinations **MUST** send this form and all required documentation no later than 6 months before the exam they wish to sit.

ECVSMR Diploma Examination Timetable

The examination is held at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University, in Belgium.

Campus Merelbeke, Salisburylaan 133, 9820 Merelbeke PC Class at base level of AUD 1 Maximum. The exam will take place over two days for all candidates taking the exam. On the day before the examination, there will be a briefing session for candidates.

Examination

Day 1: 08:00-11:00: written exam part 1 (SA&EQ)
13.00-17.00: written exam part 2 (SA&EQ)

Day 2: 08:00-12:00: review of scientific manuscript (SA&EQ)
18:00: meeting with other candidates, examination committee and other board members

These times are provisional and will be confirmed as soon as final numbers of candidates are known. A detailed examination schedule will be sent to all candidates by e-mail by 15 August 2019.

Examination Description

The exam comprises three parts and candidates are required to pass all parts of the examination.

These three parts are:

(1) Written exam part 1: core knowledge. This part will comprise 100 multiple-choice questions to allow the candidate to demonstrate his/her understanding of the concepts and principles behind sports medicine and rehabilitation and the recent scientific findings in the field. Each question has three (3) distractors and one (1) correct answer. The duration of this examination is up to 3 hours. This part of the exam will contribute 25% to the final pass mark.

(2) Written exam part 2: In this part, the candidate will be presented with 20 clinical case scenarios including video and picture material. The candidate is expected to answer questions related to the aetiopathogenesis, diagnostic process, prognosis and treatment options of the cases. This part will be specific to the small animal or equine subspecialty according to the chosen track. This will give the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate how he/she will apply his/her knowledge to approach cases. The duration of this examination is up to 4 hours. This part of the exam will contribute 50% to the final pass mark.

(3) Review of a scientific manuscript. Candidates will be presented with a scientific manuscript and are expected to write a critical review evaluating the scientific merit and discuss if and how the findings of this study may influence clinical practice. This part will focus on the candidate's ability to critically evaluate scientific studies and assess its merit in the light of clinical practice and existing scientific literature. The duration of this examination is up to 3 hours. This part of the exam will contribute 25% to the final pass mark.

The language of correspondence and examination shall be English. The use of dictionaries during the examination is allowed.

Questions for the ECVSMR examination are created and reviewed by the diplomates of the ECVSMR. Each question is validated by securing a reference source that corroborates the information in the question. The sources used include current veterinary textbooks, veterinary journals medical texts including, but not limited to, the reading list (see ECVSMR website).

Examination Rules

Prior to the examination, you will receive an e-mail with a personal identification number in your personal examination schedule. This number is only known by you and the ECVSMR office. The examination committee members do not have access to these numbers until the entire examination has been marked and the pass mark has been set. Under no circumstances should this personal identification number be divulged to any of the examiners. Please bring this number with you to the examination as you will need it to anonymously identify your answer sheets. You must inform the ECVSMR office in writing, before the registration deadline, if you have any medical reasons why a special seat is required. In such cases, supporting medical documentation will need to be provided. Candidates with reading or writing disorders will be given an extra 10% of time on receipt of written supporting medical evidence.

All examination papers will be collected after each session. No paper may be taken into or out of the examination room by candidates. The answer booklets/sheets are identified only with the candidates' personal identification numbers.

Candidates will be provided with pencils, erasers and note paper for the examinations. Under no circumstances may mobile phones, tablets, smart watches or any other electronic devices be brought into the examination hall, and all personal items must be kept in a bag that is left at the door. The only personal item that can be brought to the examination table is a language dictionary. The use of a language dictionary is permitted in all three parts of the examination. Dictionaries should be labelled with the candidate's name. The Examiners may ask to check the dictionary before, during or after the examination. It is not allowed to take the dictionaries out of the examination room during the breaks.

Each of the three parts of the examination is prepared specifically for either large animal or small animal candidates. The timetables and venues for the two groups may differ.

The Examination Committee will meet with all candidates for a general briefing session in the evening before the first examination day.

The examination may be delivered in either a written or computerised format. Negative marking is not used in any part of the examination.

Sample Questions: *see files sample questions at the website.*

Evaluation of the examination and determination of passing score

The Examination Committee will evaluate the results of the examination and set the pass mark, using an accepted validity scoring system.

Part I and Part II: The Angoff Method is used to set the pass score for the MCQ and case-based examinations. This method is based on the assembly of a group of diplomates, who are asked to evaluate each item and estimate the proportion of minimally competent examinees that would correctly answer the item. The ratings are averaged across raters for each item and

then summed to obtain a panel-recommended raw cutscore. This cutscore then represents the score which the panel estimates a minimally competent candidate would get.

A "minimally-competent" candidate possesses just enough knowledge and skill to be a Diplomate of the ECVSMR.

Each question will indicate how many marks will be allocated to the answers.

Part 3 of the exam comprises the critical evaluation of a scientific manuscript. The candidate should focus on the following five areas: (1) Evaluation of selection and description of literature and its relevance to the presented study; (2) Evaluation of description of methods and selection of material; (3) Evaluation of alignment of hypothesis and aims of the study with study design, and data analysis; (4) Evaluation of soundness of conclusion; (5)

Evaluation of layout, presentation of data, appropriate use of graphs, tables and figures. Please note that each section is equally weighted with a maximum score of 10 points and hence a total maximum of 50. The pass score is set following a standard setting procedure.

Results of the Examination

The Chair of the Examination Committee shall forward the results of the examination to the executive committee for ratification. Following ratification, the secretary of the College shall inform candidates of the outcome electronically and in addition by registered mail in case of failure. Results shall be communicated to the candidates as soon as is practicable, but no longer than **20 working days** following the completion of the examination. In case a candidate fails to demonstrate that he/she has reached the required level of expertise, a brief written examiners' report (describing which components of the exams are below or above the pass rate) will also be provided to the candidate to aid his/her preparation for future examination attempts. The exact scores and the pass marks will not be revealed to candidates.

Appeal Procedure

Any appeal against a candidate's examination outcome follows the rules outlined in the College's bylaws. The appeal must be submitted within 3 weeks after announcement of the results.

Procedure to Re-Sit the Qualifying Examinations

Candidates may apply to re-take all parts of the examination three times and all parts of the examination must be passed within 8 years of completion of the residency programme. A candidate who takes the examination and passes one of the three parts, retains credit for the parts passed for the next four years. Candidates must apply for a re-sit using the appropriate form (see Appendix "Re-sit form") a minimum of six months before the exam date together with the appropriate fee and evidence (e.g. acceptance email) of having passed the credentials. Failure to appear at an exam without extenuating circumstances or aborting an exam count as attempt to sit the exam.

Examination Security:

1. Unethical Behaviour

- a. If evidence by observation or statistical analysis or any other available means of validation suggests that one or more candidates' results may be invalid because of unethical behaviour by one or more candidates prior to, during, or after the examination, ECVSMR may change the time and place of a subsequent examination or may withhold the results pending further investigation. The affected candidates will be so notified.
- b. Examples of unethical behaviour would include, but not be limited to: (i) copying of answers from another candidate; (ii) permitting one's answers to be copied; (iii) unauthorised possession, reproduction, or disclosure of materials, including examination questions or answers, before, during, or after the examination; and (iv) any other evidence indicating that the security of the examination may have been breached.
- c. In the event that candidates are suspected to be engaging in unethical behaviour during an examination, the examiner(s) will make carefully written notes, including the party(ies) involved, time, examination section, etc., but will not disrupt the examination by confronting the candidate(s) concerned. Notification of suspected unethical behaviour will be made to the candidate(s) at the earliest possible time following completion of the examination and any subsequent investigations needed. The candidate(s) will be advised of the procedure for imposing sanctions and informed that results may be withheld as invalid.
- d. At the completion of all investigations, affected candidates will be notified of the validity of the results in question. If it is determined that the results are invalid, they will not be released.
- e. ECVSMR will make every effort to withhold the results of only those candidates directly implicated in or affected by the unethical behaviour. If the evidence of unethical behaviour casts doubt on the validity of all results, and/or this evidence does not enable the ECVSMR to identify the particular candidates implicated or affected, the Board reserves the right to withhold the results of any or all candidate(s) and, if necessary, to require such candidate(s) to take an additional examination at a later date under conditions that will ensure the validity of all results.
- f. Candidates or other persons who are directly implicated an unethical behaviour affecting the validity of the examination results are subject to additional sanctions, including (but not limited to) being barred permanently from all future examinations and exclusion from membership of the ECVSMR.

2. Procedure of investigation and determination of incidents of suspected unethical behaviour

- a. ECVSMR shall provide written notice to any candidate or other person whom it has grounds to suspect has engaged in unethical behaviour of:
 - (i) The nature of the suspected unethical behaviour;
 - (ii) The opportunity to respond to the notification of suspected unethical behaviour, in writing, to the Appeals Committee of the ECVSMR;
 - (iii) The range of possible sanction or sanctions which the ECVSMR may impose if it determines that the allegations of unethical behaviour are upheld.

b. Within twenty (20) days after receiving aforementioned notice, the candidate or other person subject to the investigation shall advise the Secretary of the ECVSMR, in writing, whether he or she wishes to admit or deny the allegations of suspected unethical behaviour and, if denied (whether in part or in whole), whether he or she wishes to make representations in writing. If the subject candidate or other person fails to respond, the Board of ECVSMR may determine the alleged unethical behaviour and the imposition of any available sanction without further notice.

c. Within twenty (20) days after receipt of a request for an opportunity to defend the allegation(s) of unethical behaviour from the subject candidate or other person, the Secretary of the ECVSMR shall provide him/her with a written summary of the incriminating evidence giving grounds for suspicion, including copies of any relevant documentary evidence. The subject candidate shall send his or her written representations to the ECVSMR office within thirty (30) days after the date of the Secretary's summary of evidence. The Appeals Committee of the ECVSMR shall issue its written decision as soon as possible thereafter.

d. The written determination of the Appeals Committee, and its recommendations as to appropriate sanction, shall be sent to the subject candidate or other person and to the Secretary of the ECVSMR at the same time. The Secretary shall distribute the Appeals Committee's written decision to the entire Board. Not before fourteen (14) days and not later than thirty (30) days of the date of the Appeals Committee's written decision, the Board will decide (by majority vote if necessary) what (if any) sanctions should be imposed as a result of the accepted findings.

e. If the subject candidate or other person wishes to appeal to the Board against the Appeals Committee's determinations of the allegations of unethical behaviour, and/or wishes to make representations as to appropriate sanction, he/she shall do so in writing to the Secretary not later than fourteen (14) days of the date of the Appeal Committee's written decision. Rules about unethical behaviour follow the respective rules as published by ECVSMR exam guide.