

ECVSMR Examination Guide

Examination 2024

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 the candidate's 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, they should immediately notify the Chairperson of the Examination Committee. Failure to appear at an examination or aborting an examination without extenuating circumstances counts as examination attempt. Candidates sitting the examination for the first time must take all three parts. Candidates sitting the examination for the second, third or fourth time must take all parts not successfully completed previously. All three parts of the examination must be successfully completed to become board-certified by the ECVSMR.

After being accepted to sit the examination, the candidate has a total of four attempts to pass all three parts of the examination within eight 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 examination

The resident must submit their credentials to the Credentials Committee within 18 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 examination MUST send this form and all required documentation no later than six months before the exam they wish to sit.

ECVSMR Diploma Examination Timetable

The examination is held at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, Veterinärplatz 1, A-1210 Vienna, in Austria. The examination takes place over two days for all candidates taking the exam. The exact dates and location of the examinations will be announced on the College's website a minimum of ten months prior to the next examination.

In case of pandemic or epidemic travel restrictions, the examination may need to be performed as online examination under national invigilation. This change in format must be announced at least two months prior to the examination date.

Examination

Day 1: 08:00-12:00: written examination Part 1 (small animal and equine)

13.00-15.00: written examination Part 2a (small animal and equine)

Day 2: 08:00-11:00: written examination Part 2b (small animal and equine)

12:00 – 15:00: written examination Part 3 (review of scientific manuscript [small animal and equine])

These times are provisional and will be confirmed as soon as final number of candidates is known. A detailed examination schedule will be sent to all candidates by e-mail by 15th January 2024.

Examination description

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

(1) Written examination Part 1: core knowledge. This part comprises 100 multiple-choice questions to allow the candidate to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and principles behind sports medicine and rehabilitation and the recent scientific findings in the field. Each question has three distractors and one correct answer. The duration of this examination is three hours.

(2) Written examination Part 2: In this part, the candidate is 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 four hours.

(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 three hours.

The language of correspondence and examination is 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 that are included in the reading list (see ECVSMR website).

Examination Rules

Prior to the examination, the candidate will receive an e-mail with a personal identification number in their personal examination schedule. This number is only known by the candidate and the Chairperson of the ECVSMR Examination Committee. 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. The candidate should bring this number with them to the examination as they will need it to anonymously identify their answer sheets.

If the candidate requires special seating for medical reasons, they will need to inform the ECVSMR office in writing prior to the registration deadline. In this particular situation, the candidate will need to provide pertinent supportive medical documentation. Candidates with reading or writing difficulty/disability 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 pens and note paper for the examinations. Candidates are not allowed to bring mobile phones, tablets, smart watches or any other electronic devices into the examination room. The candidate's personal items must be kept in a bag that is left at the entrance to the examination room. The only personal items that can be brought to the examination table are a language dictionary and drinks and snacks needed for the duration of the examination. The use of a language dictionary is permitted during 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 may be delivered in either written or computerised format. Negative marking is not used in any part of the examination.

Sample questions: *see files with sample questions on 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 1 and Part 2: 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 ECVSMR 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 cut score. This cut score 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 Diplomat of the ECVSMR.

In Part 1, one point is given for each correctly answered MCQ. In Part 2, each question will indicate how many marks will be allocated to the correct 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 they have 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 their preparation for future examination attempts.

Appeal procedure

Any appeal against a candidate’s examination outcome follows the rules outlined in the College’s bylaws.

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 eight 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 examination date together with the fee for the submission and with the evidence (e.g., acceptance email) of having passed the credentials. Failure to appear at an examination without extenuating circumstances or aborting an examination count as attempt to sit the examination.

For the Initial Applicant Pathway, after being accepted to sit the examination, the candidate has a total of four attempts to pass all three parts of the examination within eight years.

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 include, but are not 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 in 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 any other person, who is 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.