ACVIM-Approved Fellowship Program Guidelines and Procedures

1. **Program Definition and Objective**
   An **ACVIM Approved Fellowship Program** (hereafter designated as "Approved Program") comprises a minimum one-year period of advanced academic, clinical, and/or research training in a veterinary medical discipline. The program occurs after a qualified residency or specialty training program, and leads to additional knowledge, expertise, and mastery in the chosen discipline. This expertise will allow Fellows to provide a leadership role in matters pertaining to their disciplines to further knowledge in the field.

2. **Fellowship Definitions and Designations**

   a. **"ACVIM Fellow (Chosen Field)"**: An ACVIM Diplomate who has successfully completed an ACVIM-Approved Fellowship Training Program from 2023 onwards. To earn the title "Fellow (Chosen Field)" the individual must first achieve Diplomate status in the ACVIM. One cannot become an ACVIM Fellow until one is first board-certified by the ACVIM. Acceptable postnominal designations include FACVIM (Chosen Field); Fellow, ACVIM (Chosen Field); or Fellow, American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Chosen Field). This designation is not exclusive to what the training institution might otherwise grant.
      i. Individuals that complete an Approved Program that are Diplomates of another RVSO or an international specialty organization cannot use this postnominal designation (e.g., DACVP, FACVIM Hematology is not permitted) to avoid confusion as to the level of training/achievement in an ACVIM specialty. However, any non-ACVIM Diplomate that completes an Approved Program may state that on their CV as having completed a Fellowship at an institution (not an ACVIM-approved Fellowship). They can then work with their college to obtain a postnominal designation/recognition from their college. The fellow candidate can ask ACVIM's help in requesting their RSVO to provide endorsement for consideration. This could be sent to that RSVO at the time of application acceptance.

   b. **Maintenance of Credentials (MOC)**: Once the individual is awarded the title of Fellow, they must maintain their Diplomate status to continue their status as a Fellow. No additional requirements are necessary to maintain one's status as a Fellow.

c. **"Fellow Candidate, Chosen Field"**: A person currently enrolled in an Approved Program who has not yet completed that program may use this title in correspondence or other means of communication. No connection to the ACVIM may be implied.

d. **Title and Terminology for Completed Fellowship Prior to Diplomate Status**: A person who has completed an Approved Program and has not yet achieved ACVIM Diplomate status may indicate only that they have completed a Fellowship Training Program in their chosen field. Otherwise, it might be considered a violation of the ACVIM code of conduct. No connection to the ACVIM may be implied. Terms such as "ACVIM Fellow eligible" and "completed an ACVIM Approved Fellowship Program in Chosen Field" cannot be used.

e. **Retroactive Approval for Recently Completed Fellowships**. There will be a limited period after initiation/adoption of the Approved Program (2 years or until the end of 2024) in which individuals who completed a program that might have qualified as an Approved Program prior to 2022 can apply to have their specific program retroactively approved so that that individual can earn the distinction of an ACVIM Fellow and use the above designated postnominals. To be eligible for this distinction, they must have completed their program during or after 2017. Their program will need to meet all the qualifications of an Approved Program, with supporting documentation to allow this determination. The Fellowship Committee approves and oversees Approved Programs (see below) will define the requirements needed for this approval process, and subsequently act on applications for retroactive approval.

3. **Essential criteria for a Fellow Candidate**
   a. Admission to an Approved Program is at the discretion of the Approved Program, with the restrictions on use of a postnominal as defined above.
   b. For ACVIM Diplomate candidates, ACVIM board certification must be achieved before the FACVIM credential is awarded. However, a person can enter an Approved Program after completion of a residency or specialty training program before they are a Diplomate.
   c. A residency must be completed before starting the Approved Program, although combined residency and fellowship programs will be considered if each element separately meets ACVIM requirements.
   d. No aspects of the candidate's residency can be applied toward the requirements of fellowship training.
   e. For ACVIM Diplomate candidates, Approved Program approval by ACVIM is required prior to starting the Approved Program.
   f. The fellow candidate must register with the ACVIM within 30 days after the start date of the Approved Program. Required information includes:
      i. The name of the institution(s) or hospital(s) where the Approved

Program will primarily take place.

    ii.   The name and contact information for the Program Director and Primary Mentor (see below descriptions) of the Approved Program.

    iii.   A fellow candidate registration fee ($230). This fee must be received by the ACVIM office within 60 days of starting the Approved Program.

    iv.   The signatures of the fellow candidate, Program Director, and Primary Mentor.

4. **Program Director and Mentors**: All Approved Programs must have designated Program Director, Primary Mentor, and supporting Co-mentors.

    a. **Program Directors and Primary Mentors**: ACVIM Diplomates, ECVIM Diplomates, ACVIM Diplomates, or recognized experts in a specialty discipline related to the Approved Program may be a Program Director and Primary Mentor. The role of the Primary Mentor is the person responsible for supervising the training program the majority of the time. At least one ACVIM Diplomate must be a supporting co-mentor (see below) for the fellowship, though they do not have to be the Program Director or Primary Mentor. The same individual may serve as both Program Director and Primary Mentor. The minimum requirement for the number of mentors is determined by the Approved Program, although more than one mentor in the Approved Program is preferable. The names, mentor qualifications, and CVs of the Program Director, Primary Mentor, and Co-mentors involved in the Approved Program are required.

    b. **Supporting co-mentors**: Supporting co-mentors are those who additionally are directly supervising the fellow candidate during their fellowship training. They are the recognized experts in the specialty discipline related to the Approved Program.

    c. **Supporting faculty and staff**: Supporting faculty and staff are all faculty and staff, other than supervising mentors, involved in training of the fellow candidate. These may include academic faculty, clinicians, nurses, and laboratory personnel.

    d. **General Mentor Responsibilities**:
       i.   The fellow candidate must receive mentored assistance or appropriate observation on a case-by-case basis until such a time that the fellow candidate is competent to proceed with similar situations unassisted and unobserved.

       ii.   Mentorship must be always available for consultation during fellowship training. While the supervising mentor may not be always personally available, he or she should ensure that there is always

mentorship available. A mentor should be available for regular contact per fellow-in-training clinic week for that week to be counted towards the fellow candidate's Approved Program duration. During the training period, it remains the responsibility of the mentor(s) to be aware and proximate enough to ensure patient safety if applicable.

e. **Program Director Responsibilities**:
   i. The Program Director must assure each fellow candidate's progress is formally evaluated in writing and feedback provided to the fellow candidate at regular intervals, no fewer than semi-annually.

      1. The Program Director or the Primary Mentor can perform this function.

   ii. The fellow candidate should be advised of any deficiencies prior to completion of the Approved Program and an immediate performance improvement plan put in place if deficiencies are identified. If satisfactory improvement is not met in the specified time frame, the fellow candidate can be dismissed from the Approved Program. The Program Director must provide an opportunity for fellow candidates to evaluate the overall Approved Program, including any ancillary institutions, all educational events, rotations, conferences, and faculty. This feedback should be confidential and should be submitted to the Fellowship Committee for review. The ACVIM will not provide specific feedback to Approved Programs but will use that feedback to provide general comments to Approved Programs at ACVIM's discretion and take feedback into account when considering Approved Program renewal. Additional or specific evaluation or feedback from candidates given to the Program Director will be at the discretion of each institution. ACVIM may also solicit confidential feedback directly from program fellows.

f. **Unforeseen Events**: It is possible that during the fellowship training period unforeseen events might occur, including departures of the Program Director, Primary Mentor, and/or key co-mentors. In the event of any of the above or any other unexpected changes in the Approved Program occurring, it is the responsibility of the Program Director to promptly contact the Fellowship Committee with a clearly defined and outlined solution. A modification to any registration information must be reported to the ACVIM office within 60 days of the unforeseen event. In the event of the Primary Mentor leaving, no more 'Fellow-in-Training Clinic Weeks' (see Section 6) can be logged until a new Primary Mentor has been identified and the change to the Approved Program approved by the Fellowship Committee. Fellow candidates should be clear that such programmatic changes might result in a delay of the Approved Program, and if no acceptable solution can be found, the Approved Program might

be terminated.

5. **Program Length**

   a. An Approved Program must have a minimum of one year in duration. Some disciplines that are broader in scope may require a longer duration. The duration of the Approved Program is at the discretion of the training institution. The Fellowship Committee will approve whether the Approved Program duration and scope are consistent with the postnominal designation and consistent with the intent of an Approved Program.
   b. For part time Approved Programs, the Approved Program needs to provide a statement as to how it would work to allow flexibility but must be completed within three years.

6. **Virtual Training and Mentorship**
   As an option to traditional training, ACVIM Fellowships could be provided by a virtual training relationship that maintains appropriate educational and learning standards via extended, supervised clinical mentorship (in a private practice or academic settings) in which the supervising mentor is not an established part of the on-site professional staff. A program that includes virtual training and/or mentorship must demonstrate how this approach will achieve the defined learning objectives.

7. **Mentor Oversight**

   a. **Fellow-in-training full time week**: The fellow-in-training full time week must adequately fulfill the Approved Program's stated learning objectives. This will be determined by the institution and stated in the Approved Program application.

   b. **Mentor work week**: The mentor work week must be stated in the Approved Program application and outline both on-site and remote supervision. The mentor work week must include adequate time to support the fellow candidate's achievement of the defined learning objectives. Activities should focus on the professional, educational and career development of the fellow candidate. Activities may include, but aren't limited to supervision, structured feedback, (written or verbal), topic discussions, research discussions (goals, project design, etc.,), case management discussion, and procedure assistance.

8. **Institutional Facility Requirements:** Approved Programs must be conducted at a veterinary medical facility (hospital or institution) or appropriate location that offers the scope, volume, variety of patients, and/or appropriate environment for proper learning in the chosen field.

9. **Learning Objectives:** Approved Programs must provide learning objectives and a plan for how those objectives will be assessed, which validates that a person has achieved a level of mastery in the subject. The exact assessment mechanism is at the discretion of the Approved Program. Examples include observational with mentor sign-off, case log, both, and a summative examination.

   a. Assessments should reflect the domain of expertise required – e.g., procedural, applied knowledge, etc. The assessment needs to map to the learning objectives, following best pedagogical practice (blueprinting).
   b. Mastery of these learning objectives must be documented by the Program Director.

10. **Scholarly Activities:** All Approved Programs should include a scholarly component and a plan for dissemination of new knowledge to the ACVIM membership and the profession. Examples of scholarship include (but are not limited to) original research, retrospective or prospective case studies, development of therapeutic protocols, development of advanced continuing education for ACVIM Diplomates and other veterinarians, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. These components will be determined by the training institution.

    a. Approved Programs will state the expected deliverables or evidence associated with this requirement.

11. **Didactic components and educational events**: These will be defined by the Approved Program. Examples include lectures, rounds, conferences, discussion series, and/or journal clubs, covering not only focused topics in the chosen field, but appropriate related fields.

12. **Funding**: Institutions are responsible for providing salary and research support (if applicable) for each fellowship candidate. Institutional support may be sourced from a third party, e.g., an industry partner or grant funding, but this must be disclosed.

13. **Fellowship Candidate Selection**: Approved Programs are responsible for the selection of the Fellow Candidates.

14. **New Program Approval**: The Fellowship Committee will review applications at least twice per year, with specific deadlines defined that allow time for the Fellowship Committee to review the program plan and render a decision. Requests for consideration of program applications outside the published deadlines may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The approval of the Approved Program will remain in force for a period of time (e.g., 2 years) determined by the Fellowship Committee, taking into account any substantive changes in the program structure or personnel. The Fellowship Committee will seek expertise outside of the committee if needed to evaluate certain programs or components of programs as needed at their discretion. For example, for some procedural-based fellowships, subject matter expertise could be sought to assess the minimum number of procedures performed

by the fellowship candidate for appropriate mastery.

15. **Approval of Programs That Have Content Which Overlap With Other RSVOs:** Programs that have content for which the majority of learning objectives and training are best suited to other RVSOs will be initially directed to the appropriate RVSO for Fellowship recognition. However, if that RVSO elects not to proceed with the fellowship request or does not have the inclination or structure to support fellowship approval/recognition, it could be reconsidered by ACVIM. The Fellowship Committee will make the determination as to the suitability of a particular program for an ACVIM Approved Program.

16. **Ongoing Approved Program Oversight**: Review of the primary training institution's Approved Program(s) will occur at an interval determined by the Fellowship Committee, taking into account when substantive changes occur, so as to ensure the minimum standards are met. On behalf of each primary training institution, Program Directors shall submit documentation for each fellow candidate participating in the Approved Program over the last three years to the ACVIM office.

17. **ACVIM Fellowship Candidate Approved Program Completion**:

    a. The Program Director, Primary Mentor, and supporting co-Mentors and faculty will determine if the fellow candidate has successfully completed the Approved Program.
    b. Upon completion of the program, the Program Director will provide a statement indicating successful completion of the Approved Program.
    c. Review by the ACVIM Fellowship Committee will occur after submission of materials to the ACVIM office, at which time the designation FACVIM will be awarded to the fellow candidate.

18. **All Approved Programs Must Comply with the ACVIM Policy for the Humane Treatment of Animals:**
    The ACVIM believes that the use of animals in research and training is a privilege that carries with it professional, scientific, ethical, and moral obligations. Based on these principles and beliefs, the ACVIM requires that all research studies conducted within any Approved Program have the approval of the appropriate regulatory group (i.e., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Animal Ethics Committee) and document this approval. Every animal shall have compassionate care, comfort and protection from abuse and unnecessary pain and distress. Investigators shall also minimize stress and fear in animals. The ACVIM shall not approve programs that incorporate non-clinical research studies that require euthanasia as the study endpoint. The ACVIM considers euthanasia acceptable in clinical studies, with informed consent of the owner or responsible agent, if the disease or condition being studied or an unanticipated illness or injury results in pain and suffering in the animal which cannot be alleviated with standard methods. If applicable, the ACVIM requires informed owner consent in all

clinical/research trials, and must be documented for all studies conducted within any Approved Program.

Use of samples from biorepositories is acceptable for studies conducted within Approved Programs. For projects involving the use of recombinant DNA, viral vectors, and/or radioactivity, a copy of the Institutional Biosafety Office approval must be provided for program approval. If the proposed Approved Program does not require IACUC or Institutional Biosafety approval, a statement will be required that indicates that the proposed Approved Program is exempt and explain why.

The ACVIM reserves the right to terminate program approval if there are concerns about animal wellbeing.