

## Certification Town Hall FAQs | November 2022

### Passing Score Determination

#### **How is a passing score set?**

There are several recognized processes for standard setting. Prometric, our psychometric company, typically uses the Modified Angoff method, supplemented by the Beuk Relative-Absolute Compromise method (see [‘The Art and Science of Standard Setting: Determining the Passing Score’](#)). For the ACVIM examinations, each specialty will have a committee of subject matter experts (SMEs) that are asked to participate in standard setting activities to provide a recommended cut score that is used by the Board of Regents (BOR) to make a final decision. The chair of the standard setting committee (i.e., “Rating” Committee) meets with the Board and historically, the committee recommendation has been accepted as the final cut score. The committee and Board are aware of how a cut score determines the number of people that will pass or fail the examination. However, this is not the factor that determines the appropriate passing score.

#### **When are the exams scored?**

Examinations are scored after the testing window closes and scores are released within 45 days post exam administration, per ABVS guidelines.

#### **Where can we find the pass rates for the General and Specialty examinations?**

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/cardiology/cardiology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/laim/laim-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/neurology/neurology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/nutrition/nutrition-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/oncology/oncology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/saim/saim-exams>

#### **How do we determine if the examination was too hard?**

There are a number of indicators an examination may be too difficult for the intended testing population.

1. Pass rates – if only a small proportion of candidates are passing an examination, it may be an indication that:
  - a. the content is too difficult for test-takers;
  - b. candidates were not appropriately prepared to answer the items as they were presented; or
  - c. the cut score was set too high, potentially resulting in false negatives (candidates who are, in fact, minimally qualified to practice, but do not pass)
2. Item performance – if test items are proving difficult for test-takers (e.g., only a small percent of candidates answer questions correctly), it can be an indication that:
  - a. the test content is too difficult for the target population;
  - b. candidates were not appropriately prepared to answer the items as they were presented; or
  - c. there are flaws in the items and they should be reviewed by subject matter experts

\*Note: if testing volumes are relatively small (e.g., fewer than 100 candidates), the stability of item statistics may be questionable as the performance of one or two candidates can have a large impact on overall results.
3. Candidate comments – candidate comments about the difficulty of the examination questions may indicate the content is too difficult or problematic in some way.

#### **How can we help improve pass rates for our residents?**

Residency Training Programs (RTPs) can help improve pass rates for candidates by recommending that residents review:

1. examination specifications and focus their studies on content indicated in the exam blueprints

2. all exam-related information on the ACVIM website
3. practice tests to familiarize self with examination software functionality and tools

### **Examination Content and Maintenance**

#### **If we are drawing on banks of existing questions, how do we ensure that the examinations reflect the most current literature?**

Each time an examination form is assembled, it is reviewed by a committee of specialty-specific SMEs. Any items that are not appropriate for use, as determined by the committee, are replaced and not used for the test.

#### **What years of literature are covered on the 2023 examinations?**

The suggested study materials for each examination can be found in the applicable examination preparation information documents on the ACVIM website:

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/cardiology/cardiology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/laim/laim-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/neurology/neurology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/nutrition/nutrition-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/oncology/oncology-exams>

<https://www.acvim.org/resources-for/candidates/saim/saim-exams>

#### **Why do we have one group write questions and a different group review the questions?**

Dividing the writing and review duties allows for an objective review of each item (i.e., question). There may be some overlap in the composition of item writing and item review committees to allow for continuity of understanding but implementing an independent review of the items helps ensure the item is clear, accurate and free from unintended bias. Increased numbers of SMEs involved in the item development process also helps to ensure individuals with a broader diversity in background and experience are involved in the development and validation of the examination item.

#### **What is the process for determining and removing “bad” items from an examination?**

After each test administration, Prometric’s psychometricians review each item’s performance. Any item that does not perform as expected, within acceptable statistical parameters, is reviewed by SMEs to determine if scoring changes are required. In some cases, an item is hard but fair, however in other cases, subject matter experts may determine the answer key should be modified or the item should be deleted or all-keyed.

#### **Will exam committees meet in person?**

We know that one of the great rewards of volunteering is the connections made between colleagues. We want to make every opportunity to foster those connections, knowing that is a strong motivator for volunteers to offer their time and talents. Now that travel is possible, we have planned for several groups to meet in person next year.

However, we also know that virtual work offers benefits to people who aren’t able to travel for personal, health or family reasons. We want to make sure we are as inclusive as possible, so we will continue to look to balance the opportunities to participate.

### **How has communication with examination volunteers changed to improve the quality and accuracy of examination content and grading?**

Exam committees with oversight of 2023 exams have begun to meet and define a plan to do their work. This is six months sooner than last year's onboarding and training. We have also added the following steps to the process for 2023:

- Staff and committee members will conduct a review of the examinations prior to import into the test platform.
- Staff and committee members then review the examination in the test platform prior to administration.
- Job Task Analysis Committees for all specialties will meet in person.
- A new examination scoring system will be implemented to improve the experience for committee members responsible for scoring.

### **What steps are being taken to ensure that the examination content is free from errors, such as mistakes that arise from item shuffling or disconnecting a question from the relevant scenario, which are examples of problems that occurred last year?**

In addition to providing a much longer lead time for volunteers to do their work, Prometric will be taking a several steps to ensure an improved delivery experience for ACVIM candidates, including the following:

- Prometric will review of the Test Requirements Document (TRD) with ACVIM staff to ensure that all delivery details are accurately reflected in the documentation.
- Prometric will conduct internal quality control checks (using the TRD as the source of truth) independently with both our Test Publishing and Test Development teams.
- Prometric will work with ACVIM to test the delivery functionality and confirm compliance with the TRD.

The combined quality assurance activities with both ACVIM and Prometric is designed to ensure an experience that is as error-free as possible.

## **Examination Administration**

### **Will there be an opportunity to administer examinations at independent sites using ACVIM proctors?**

For 2023, candidates will have the option to take their examinations at either (1) a Prometric center or (2) via remote proctoring at a location of their choice. We had explored the possibility of accrediting individual residency program locations as independent sites for test administration; however, we are discovering that issues of risk, liability, and security, along with the complicated logistics (in terms of technology, location, hardware, proctor certification, etc.) need to be more fully understood before a decision is made to add that to the list of site options.

### **How is remote live monitoring not similar to on site live monitoring?**

Remote live proctoring is when a candidate takes the exam at a place of their choosing and the exam is proctored virtually from a different location.

Live monitoring is when the candidate and proctor are at the same physical location, such as in the case of a Prometric center.

Both modalities use Prometric software for administration and follow strict security protocols.



**How will we ensure that the Prometric centers have the correct information about ACVIM candidate rules (e.g., ability to have headphones, scratch paper, take bathroom breaks, etc.)**

Some of the challenges in 2022 were due to it being the first year of administering our programs through Prometric. The requirements and allowances for ACVIM candidates are unique from most programs, and this customization was not understood well across the Prometric system. Knowing this, we have scheduled specific reviews with Prometric's Client Success team to review test delivery requirements and ensure that all requirements are accurately and thoroughly noted for all test delivery personnel. We will also make sure that candidates know who to contact if there are concerns on examination day that they are experiencing challenges with Prometric test center personnel.

**Candidate Service and Support**

**Will there be real time help—technical or other for candidates and residency director as issues come up?**

In the candidate scheduling email, methods for contact are noted. ACVIM staff will be available to answer candidate questions during extended business hours; however, all technical and/or software support issues will require assistance from Prometric staff as indicated in the scheduling email.

**What are the plans to improve scheduling availability for candidates, ensuring they can take the examination in a location that is the closest to them?**

All exam takers are being surveyed as to preferred administration modality and location. That information will then be used for "seat blocking," a method to "reserve available seats for ACVIM candidates. This will ensure that ACVIM candidates have seats available at/near preferred location and during reasonable times for scheduling purposes. This is the process that has been used to block seats for General Exam scheduling and will be used again to determine blocking for specialty examinations.

**Is there now a practice test available? Is it electronically administered?**

While content-based practice examinations are not available, practice examinations to gain familiarity with the administration platform and in-software tools will be available to candidates.

**Where should I send additional questions?**

[Certification@ACVIM.org](mailto:Certification@ACVIM.org)