

## ACVIM Certification Town Hall – September 2025 Q&A Summary and Highlights

### General Session Overview / Questions and Answers Pertaining to all Specialties

The 2025 Certification Town Hall opened with a recap of the Certification Council's role and structure, updates on the Council's key initiatives and exam program enhancements. Topics included the recent rollout of scaled scoring, ongoing implementation of statistical equating, and an overview of the 2025 General Examination administration.

The session also highlighted progress in item (i.e., exam question) tagging, an initiative aimed at improving item bank organization, alignment with exam blueprints, and efficiency in form development. Council members emphasized the importance of volunteer participation in this process and across all certification activities.

The session reinforced ACVIM's commitment to maintaining fairness, rigor, and transparency across all certification programs and then attendees broke out into specialty sessions.

**Q:** Is ACVIM reconsidering the timing and spacing between the General and Specialty Exams?

**A:** Yes, it will be revisited in the future. Some attendees requested reconsideration of the timing and spacing between the General and Specialty Exams, noting that clinics and training programs face challenges when multiple residents are away simultaneously for both exams. The Certification Council recently reviewed this topic following a February 2025 survey distributed to all ACVIM program directors and candidates. The Council reviewed key takeaways and insights from the 236 survey responses during its April 2025 in-person meeting in Denver.

Overall, the data indicated that ACVIM is administering exams at appropriate times of year and with a reasonable interval between the General and Specialty Exams. While it is difficult to meet the needs of every individual, program, and specialty, the results suggested that the current timing generally meets the majority of stakeholder needs. The LAIM Specialty Exam administration received the lowest favorability in terms of timing; however, feedback from LAIM Diplomates was the most varied in their preferred exam window. Currently, no changes are planned, but the topic remains an area of ongoing interest for future review.

**Q:** Is ACVIM considering setting specialty exam dates farther in advance or on a consistent annual schedule?

**A:** Setting annual exam dates is a complex and multi-step process involving factors such as testing center capacity, staffing availability, proximity to the ACVIM Forum, operational logistics, and timing of other specialty exams. While fixed recurring dates may not be

feasible, ACVIM will explore publishing exam windows further in advance to assist with long-term planning.

Q: When will the new candidate dashboards and electronic logs be available to candidates?

A: The online submission platform will be used to track all aspects of credentials and overall progress toward Board-certification. While the team is actively developing this functionality, there is not yet a firm timeline for the phased deployment. Updates will be communicated as soon as details become available.

Q: What steps are being taken to improve post-residency certification rates?

A: Leadership emphasized that improving post-residency completion rates is a key focus area for 2026. The team is reviewing historical data to identify which requirements present the greatest challenges and exploring new ways to better support candidates as they transition from candidacy to certification.

Q: How can Diplomates contribute to exam development and other certification efforts?

A: Diplomates are encouraged to volunteer for all certification committees, including item writing, review, and form development. Continued volunteer engagement is vital, and deeply appreciated, as it ensures the certification process remains current, credible, and representative of each specialty.

### Cardiology Q&A

Q: Could the Cardiology Form Review Committee return to in-person meetings for exam grading?

A: Staff shared that the move to remote review of open-response grading was made to support inclusivity and cost efficiency across specialties, but the request for an in-person format may be reconsidered for future cycles after the 2026 administration.

Q: How many candidates did not receive a passing score on their credentialing packets in 2024?

A: None. All candidates who submitted their credentialing packets in 2024 received passing scores on the questions submitted with their packets.

### Large Animal Internal Medicine (LAIM) Q&A

Q: Why are LAIM candidate pass rates lower for the General and Specialty Exams?

A: The Certification Council will review LAIM candidate performance data to better understand factors contributing to lower pass rates. Members noted that the General Exam's late-spring administration coincides with foaling season, which can be a particularly demanding time for many LAIM candidates. The Council will also explore whether pass rates vary by residency program type (equine, food animal, or mixed) as part of this review.

Q: Is the General Exam small-animal focused?

A: No. A member of the General Form Review Committee confirmed that the General Exam questions are broad in scope and designed to assess foundational internal medicine knowledge across all specialties.

## Nutrition Q&A

Q: What are ACVIM's plans for the future of the Nutrition Specialty Exam?

A: A Job Task Analysis (JTA) will be conducted in early 2026, which will serve as the foundation for updating the exam blueprint for the 2027 Nutrition Specialty Exam. The JTA will also guide a review of the exam's assessment design, including the balance of item types, section structure, and test duration. Volunteers are needed to participate in the JTA process, and recruitment is underway to ensure diverse representation across the specialty.

Note: After the Town Hall, staff identified an error on one slide in the Nutrition presentation, which incorrectly listed the total number of exam points for 2025 as 500. The correct total is 400 points, and updated slides have been shared for member reference.

## Oncology Q&A

Q: Is ACVIM reviewing residency training requirements related to rotation length?

A: Attendees raised questions about the required length of rotations, particularly in non-ACVIM specialties such as Diagnostic Imaging and Surgical Oncology. Some programs noted difficulty in securing two-week rotations and asked if one-week rotations could be acceptable. This feedback will be referred to the Residency Training Committee (RTC) for review, as changes to training requirements would apply broadly across specialties.

Q: Is ACVIM reviewing recent language updates in certification documents?

A: Members asked about wording updates in the Certification Manual (CM) and specialty manuals—specifically, the change from “should be” to “must be.” Staff confirmed that efforts are underway to align manual language and ensure consistent interpretation across specialties.

## Small Animal Internal Medicine (SAIM) Q&A

Q: Is the SAIM publication requirement being reviewed?

A: Yes. The SAIM publication requirement is currently under review to ensure alignment with specialty needs and equity across candidates. Member feedback will be solicited as part of this process, and any proposed changes will follow the established Certification Council review and approval procedures.

Q: Does the high SAIM exam pass rate (around 90%) reflect appropriate exam rigor?

A: Leadership explained that strong performance likely reflects improved Residency Training, greater access to study materials, and expanded opportunities for preparation, not reduced exam quality.