



ECZM Guidelines for Examination Candidates

Last updated: June 15, 2022

Contact details of selected ECZM officers:

Dr. Isabelle Deprez – ECZM Secretary

(Note: All information should initially be directed to the ECZM Secretary)

Affiliation: Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences,
Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Address: 52 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5B4
Canada

Business phone + 33 7 82 37 13 05

E-mail: secretary@eczm.eu

Dr. Mark Mitchell - ECZM Credential Committee Chair

Affiliation: Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Louisiana State University

Address: 1823 Veterinary Teaching Hospital
Baton Rouge, LA, 70803
United States of America

Business phone +1 225-578-9738

E-mail: mmitchell@lsu.edu

Dr. Hélène Deflers – ECZM Treasurer

Affiliation: Veterinary Clinic Alvetia

Address: 149 route de Guentrange
Thionville
57100
France

Business phone: +33 3 82 88 26 66

E-mail: treasurer@eczm.eu

Dr. Yvonne van Zeeland – ECZM Examination Committee Chair

Affiliation: Division of Zoological Medicine, Department of Clinical Sciences,
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Utrecht University

Address: Yalelaan 108
3584 CM Utrecht
The Netherlands

Business phone: +31 30 253 4542

E-mail: Y.R.A.vanZeeland@uu.nl

Information regarding the application to sit the ECZM Specialty Examination:

(Also see ECZM Policies & Procedures Chapter 6: Application process for ECZM examination)

- All potential applicants must notify the ECZM Examination Committee Chair of their intent to apply for the qualifying examination before **October 1st** of the year prior of their anticipated examination. Following this notification the Chair will send the all pertinent information required for the application process and the examination to the applicant.
- Applicants must submit all in-press and published manuscripts and written evidence of other fulfilled requirements (see below) to complete their examination credentials to the Secretary and Credentials Committee of the ECZM before **November 1st** of the year prior to their anticipated examination.
- Whilst all other requirements of the application process must be completed prior to the November 1st deadline, it is not mandatory that the residency training program is completed by this time. It is recommended that the training program should be completed at least 2 months before the anticipated examination date. However, completing the training program nearer to the examination date is permitted, providing all matters are in order and the Credential Committee and the Education and Residency Committee are aware of the shorter time frame. Completion of a training program less than 2 months before the scheduled examination is entirely at the applicants risk. If there proves to be inadequate time for the relevant committees to fully evaluate the credentials then the applicant will not be permitted to sit the examination. Supervisors and applicants are encouraged to allow appropriate time examination preparation between the end of the training program and the examination.
- The approximate dates of examination will be posted on the website at least four months in advance, while the specific date will be provided to applicants nearer the time of the examination.
- In order to credential for the examination, all candidates must submit the following documents electronically to the ECZM Secretary and Credentials Committee:
 - Covering letter requesting application for examination credentialing in your chosen specialty. Also include a summary of the documents you will be including in your application.
 - Curriculum Vitae – see appendix 4 of the ECZM Policies & Procedures for guidance.

- Reference letter(s) from the program supervisor(s) of each institution involved in the training program. All letters must be from persons familiar with the candidate's training and be sent (electronically) directly to the Secretary. Requests by the applicant for reference letters should be made early so as to assure that these letters are received by the Secretary on or before the application deadline (November 1st of the year prior to the examination). It is the applicant's responsibility to see that all letters are sent to the Secretary on time. The Credentials Committee is responsible for absolute discretion and confidentiality regarding the reference letter(s). After approval of the candidate to sit the examination the reference letter(s) will be deleted. Reference letters must contain the following:
 - Verification of the specialty zoological medicine training program and level of supervision.
 - An opinion regarding the applicant's proficiency, judgment, and competence as a specialty zoological practitioner and readiness to sit the examination.
 - The commitment of the applicant to the constitutional objectives of the ECZM.
 - The moral and ethical standing of the applicant within the veterinary profession.

- Documentation logs. The completed and verified logs required by the specialty must accompany the application. If the training program is not yet finished then the logs must be complete up to the time of application.

- Case Reports (where required): The specified number (See Policies & Procedures; Part 2 for specific requirements) of case reports of cases personally handled with a maximum of 1500 words each, which give an assessment of the analytical approach of the candidate.

- Publications. Original peer reviewed papers from within the candidate's specialty, as required for the specialty (see Policies & Procedures; Part 2). These must be published or fully accepted for publication as evidenced by a letter from the editor.

- Any relevant previous correspondence relating to the training program and application.

- Evidence of payment of *Credentialing for Examination* fee. The application will not be evaluated or processed without payment of the fee indicated in Chapter 9 of the ECZM Policies & Procedures. This fee is non-refundable. If any portion of the application has to be re-submitted the payment of further fees will be at the discretion of the Credential Committee. Contact the ECZM Treasurer (treasurer@eczm.eu) for details on how to make payment.
- The responsibility for accuracy and availability of all required credentials rests with the applicant.
- The Education and Residency Committee must also verify the successful completion of a standard residency or alternative training program. They will inform the Credential Committee of this when the training program is completed. If completion of the training program is still pending, then provisional approval of the examination credentials may be provided, until such time as the training program is finished (see above).
- Following review of the submitted credentials by the Credentials Committee, applicants (and the Examination Committee Chair) will be notified of the outcome by the ECZM Secretary on or before **December 1st** of the year prior to the examination.
- Successful applicants will be invited to submit an application to sit the examination (see below). Unsuccessful applicants will receive an explanation of the deficiencies in credentials. Minor revisions may be accepted by the Credentials Committee in order to accept the application, and the applicant will be advised of this, as well as the revised deadlines expected. If credentials are rejected and require major additions or revisions, then the applicant will be invited to re-submit the following year. A subsequent re-application must include re-submission of credentials and a new application form, an updated Curriculum Vitae, relating correspondences, and an additional application fee. The documentation must be presented in the manner previously described, and in accordance with the same deadlines.
- Applications to sit the examination must be made electronically to the ECZM Secretary and Examination Committee by **January 1st** of the year of the anticipated examination. For this purpose, applicants should submit the examination application form, and pay the examination fee through the website. This would usually be done directly after acceptance of examination credentials but applicants do have up to eight years to pass the examination following completion of their training program.
- Payment of the examination fee is required on or before the application deadline of January 1st of the year of the anticipated examination. The fee is non-refundable.

Repeated examination attempts (even if just one part) will require an additional payment of the full examination, on each occasion. The ECZM Treasurer

- (treasurer@eczm.eu) may be contacted in case further assistance with making payment is needed.
- The Chair of the Examination Committee will notify successful applicants of the location, dates and procedure for the examination by February 1st of the year of the examination.
- **Late or incomplete applications at any stage of this process will not be considered.**
- All correspondence regarding the application procedure and notification should be addressed to the ECZM officers as indicated in these guidelines. All submitted application materials become the sole property of the ECZM and will not be returned to the applicant.

Preparing for the Exam

Preparation for the exam requires a multi-faceted approach. Part of the preparation will be inherent from formal residency training, through the experience gained in practice, or working with herpetological species in other settings. This day to day experience will be useful in the decision-making process. The second aspect involves the study of the relevant specialty literature. This presents an opportunity to gain a more in-depth understating of the literature with the goal of then being able to apply this information in a practical manner. The examinees should work with their mentors in order to develop a study strategy and identify the most relevant information from the literature. Some useful tips & tricks (do's and don'ts) may be found below:

Do:

- Prepare ahead of time by reading sources from the reading list.
- Schedule enough time to read the sources in the reading list prior to the exam. This may require up to a year or more of study.
- Organize your study materials in a manner that can be reviewed and referenced easily.
- Contact the residency mentors and other ECZM diplomates and exam committee members of the respective specialty with any questions.
- Contact other fellow residents to create a network of support, resources, and study groups. Regular journal clubs and case discussions (by Skype / similar) will help extend your knowledge beyond cases seen in your residency program, as well as providing support for the challenges of a residency.
- Enjoy the training and study process as an opportunity to expand and refine your knowledge with the goal of becoming an ECZM specialist.
- Know that the exam committee and the ECZM diplomates want you to do well and be successful.

Don't:

- Try to go through the study and preparation process alone.
- Forget to regularly eat and rest, especially in the last days preceding the exam.
- Forget the exam is only the final step in your preparation as an ECZM diplomate. All your hard work and dedication during your training has prepared you to be a better veterinarian.

Exam structure and logistics:

The ECZM Specialty exam aims to test broad-based and in-depth knowledge as well as critical thinking abilities of the entry level specialist. An entry level specialist should have in depth knowledge of the aspects that are considered relevant for their specialty, including care, husbandry, anatomy, physiology and most common and important diseases affecting the species encountered in day-to-day practice. Examinees must show the ability to use information presented in the decision-making process of being able to e.g. identify clinical problems, make a differential diagnoses list, design a diagnostic plan, and/or make appropriate recommendations regarding interventions.

For all ECZM specialties, the examination is composed of two sections, i.e. a multiple choice examination and a practical/short essay examination. More specific details regarding the exam parts, including number of questions and time allowed, can be found further on in this document. A more detailed overview of the division of exam questions across topics, as well as mock exam questions and the most current reading list, are provided in separate documents.

- The examination will be proctored directly and throughout by an ECZM Diplomate whom may or may not be in the subspecialty of exam candidate. However, an ECZM Diplomate of the same specialty as the candidate will be available on site for specific examination questions in the event that the proctor cannot address an examinee's question or concern during the examination.
- All questions in the examinations are composed by Diplomates from the relevant specialty. The majority of questions used in the exam will be referenced from the relevant ECZM Specialty Reading List. However, occasional questions may be referenced from additional relevant resources where the subject matter is important and relevant to the specialty.
- The reading list and the examination are only given in English. Candidates whose first language is not English may use a dictionary during the examination if necessary. Other permitted items include pencils, pens, ruler, calculator and personal watch/timer. Electronic devices including personal phones, tablets and/or computers, printed notes or books/journals are not allowed.
- Candidates may bring a bottle of water, soft drink and/or snack type food items into the examination room. The examination committee will provide water, soft drinks and snacks during the morning and afternoon sections of the exam. Lunch will be available within walking distance and candidates have a lunch break in between the morning and afternoon session.
- An examinee may leave the examination area during the examination for bathroom access provided no other examinees are out of the room at that time, and no cell phone or computer access occurs. During the lunch hour, examinees and examiners should not

interact. However, no restrictions are placed on cell phone or computer access as the two sections of the examination are structured independently, and an examinee is permitted to study during this break if they choose.

- Smoking is prohibited in the exam rooms and subject to local regulations outside of the exam room. For special needs, the candidate may contact the Examination Committee Chair before the exam.
- Extra time may be allowed in cases of dyslexia, medical reasons or other circumstances. A recent medical report or certificate must be provided with the examination application. An appropriate amount of extra time will be decided upon by the Examination Committee prior to the examination and the candidate will be informed.
- If for any reason a candidate is unable to attend the examination, it is important that he/she informs the examination committee as soon as possible.

Part I: ECZM Practical Examination

The practical portion of the examination aims to test in-depth knowledge and critical thinking and is composed of short answer questions that relate to an appropriate clinical or management situation. There will be a predetermined number of questions, which can comprise of either a short essay question or a practical question (possibly in multiple parts). The questions may make use of physical material, radiographs, data for analysis, situational material, photos, videos and anything else that can be used to test knowledge of the specialty. Incorporated into the timing of examination will be a review period of at least 30 minutes at the end, granted before the question papers are passed to the examiner(s). **The pass mark is set at 65%.**

For this part of the exam, short written answers of a few words to one or a few sentences are generally expected so it is recommended to keep answers brief and concise rather than long paragraphs (e.g. bullet point style when listing multiple alternatives). When answering questions it is important that the examiner can follow your line of thought, so ensure that the answer is structured and ordered as it would be in a real-life situation, and write down even obvious basic facts or decisions, if these are relevant to your decision-making process. In addition, remember to list the most obvious, common or top answers to consider first, as only the top answers will be evaluated when asking for a certain number of options. Similarly, start with providing the information you are most certain about first and put any answers you are less certain about last.

While lack of proper grammar and full sentences, and neatness are not associated with negative scoring, an examinee must provide sufficient clarity of hand-writing (if applicable) and sentence structure in English to ensure that the answer can be understood by the graders.

Table 1: Number of questions and duration of the practical portion of the ECZM specialty examination for each of the ECZM Specialties

ECZM Specialty	Number of PQ (number of points)	Exam duration
Avian	27 (270 points)	4 hours
Herpetology	27 (270 points)	4 hours
Small mammal	27 (270 points)	4 hours
WPH	27(270 points)	4 hours
ZHM	27 (270 points)	4 hours

Part II: ECZM Multiple-Choice Examination

The MCQ examination test aims to test both broad and in-depth knowledge and consists of a pre-determined number multiple-choice questions of varying degrees of difficulties (see Table 2). Each question is worth 1 point. **The pass mark is set at 65%.**

Table 2: Number of questions and duration of the multiple-choice exam for each of the ECZM Specialties

ECZM Specialty	Number of MCQ (number of points)	Exam duration
Avian	175 (175 points)	4 hours
Herpetology	175 (175 points)	4 hours
Small mammal	175 (175 points)	4 hours
WPH	175 (175 points)	4 hours
ZHM	175 (175 points)	4 hours

Each multiple-choice question consists of two parts: the stem and the responses. The stem is the introductory statement or question. The responses are suggested answers that complete the statement or answer the question asked in the stem. For each question, there is one correct response, and 4 distractors. In case multiple options may appear plausible or very similar, candidates are required to select the BEST alternative. This (correct or best) answer should be indicated by highlighting the correct answer (for a digital exam) or circling the letter preceding the responses with black or blue ink (for a written exam). Alternatively, a separate document can be used to list the question and the correct response (e.g. 1-A, 2-C, etc). When a correction of an already circled answer is needed (in case of a handwritten exam only), the correct answer should be clearly written down next to the question. If more than one answer is circled, and it is not clear which one is the selected one, no points will be awarded.

Additional guidelines for the exam:

- Read all questions carefully to ensure that you answer is complete and to the point, only containing the information that is asked for.
- Do not leave any questions blank, but rather try and make an educated guess. Even if time is running out, it is best to fill in answers rather than leave them blank.
- Do not panic during the exam, ask questions, if needed

- When stuck on a question, take care to not lose any precious time, but rather move on to the next question to then come back once the other questions have been reviewed and answered. The invigilators will regularly call out the time spent or left to help candidates with the time management during the exam.
- After completing the examination, both the questions and answers should be handed in.
- It is possible to challenge a question in any section during the examination process. These details are to be written to the examiners on the examination documents. Please ensure that the comments are clearly readable and constructive in nature. They will be reviewed during the grading process; it is up to the discretion of the committee members to decide whether the comment is valid and should affect the scoring process. No additional time will be provided during a given section if an examinee chooses to provide this commentary.

Please note that the exam is strictly confidential and there should be no exchange of examination questions between examination committee members and exam candidates, and in between past and current exam candidates, with the exception of the mock exam questions provided by each specialty examination committee to exam candidates. To ensure confidentiality is maintained, all candidates and diplomates will be required to fill out a confidentiality agreement prior to their involvement in the examination process.

Grading, communication of results and follow-up

The examination papers will be marked within three weeks of the examination being completed.

The multiple choice exam is graded independently by two examination committee members using the key. The grade will be verified by a third committee member in case of discrepancy in the total grade obtain by the first two reviewers.

The practical exam is graded by two examination committee members of the respective specialty. These committee members either grade simultaneously or independently, using the exam key. In case of a discrepancy or disagreement regarding the grade for an individual (sub)question, further discussion will take place to reach consensus, or a third reviewer/grader will be consulted to come to a final decision regarding the score for this particular question. In case concerns are raised regarding the question wording and/or accuracy, the key interpretation and/or a candidate's answer not being on the key but being valid and accurate, the exam key may be amended.

The Examination Chair will ensure that results will be communicated to the candidate once the grading process is finalized. All candidates will receive the exam results at a similar time (but no later than 21 days following the examination), either electronically or in person. The Examination chair will also inform the Executive committee regarding the candidates that have been successful in passing the exam. Until such notice, the examination results are to be kept confidential and should not be communicated to anyone else.

- Following the exam, examinees will be given an examination feedback form that must be completed and returned to the Examination Committee Chair within one month of the examination. The opportunity for further feedback and discussion with non-successful candidates and their mentor will be offered by the Chair and the specialty lead.
- Successful candidates must submit 10 MCQ and 2 Practical questions relevant to their specialty as part of their certification as a Diplomate. These questions must be accepted prior to the first recertification as a Diplomate, in addition to the mandatory number of questions that each Diplomate is required to submit for each credentialing period. Preferably, questions are submitted within three months of the exam date. All questions should be referenced from the specialty reading list. Specialty leads for the respective examination committee group will provide documentation and guidelines to support and assist the preparation of questions. The submitted questions will be reviewed by the examination committee and feedback provided as needed until the questions are accepted for inclusion in the exam..

- Candidates must pass the examination within eight (8) years of completion of the residency program. They may sit each different part of the examination on a maximum of four (4) occasions. Any candidate who fails either part of the examination may, at the discretion of the Examination committee, be permitted to re-sit just that part on a subsequent year.
- Failure to pass the entire examination within the limits defined above means that the candidate must repeat the examination credentialing process and will be required to complete additional periods of training, experience or written work as decided by the Credentials Committee. The second approval by the Credentials Committee will be reviewed annually, the incoming Examination Committee chairperson and the incoming Credentials Committee chairperson having the option of recommending reapplication on a yearly basis if the candidate continues to fail the examination. Minimum repeat examination credentialing requirements can be found in the Policies & Procedures, Part 1.
- In the event that any candidate believes that the examination has been unfair in any respect, he/she is allowed to appeal the decision of the Examination committee. Details regarding the appeals procedure are listed in the ECZM Bylaws.

Timeline for credentialing application for taking examination and appropriate contact information for this information to be submitted.

ALL CREDENTIALING APPLICATION MATERIAL MUST BE FORWARDED TO THE ECZM SECRETARY AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.

November 1st: Credentialing applications must be submitted if the candidate is to be considered for examination in the following calendar year. (Credentialing fees are detailed in Addendum A).

December 1st: Candidate will be informed if they have passed the credentialing process in order to sit the ECZM qualifying examination in the following calendar year.

January 1st: Applications to sit the examination must be made in the year they expect to sit the examination. The examination application for and details of examination fees are included as Addendum of the ECZM Policies and Procedures Manual which can be found on the ECZM website.

February 1st: Credentialed candidates will receive information regarding location and time of ECZM qualifying examination from ECZM Examination Committee Chair along with the specific information regarding the two parts of the examination.

March-May: ECZM qualifying examination to coincide with ECZM Annual General Meeting (AGM). Test results will be provided to all candidates simultaneously, no later than 21 days following the examination. Candidates will be provided an evaluation form regarding the examination that must be filled out within 1 month following to examination.

For new ECZM Diplomates to receive their board certification certificate they shall be obliged to submit ten (10) multiple choice questions and two (2) practical questions with properly referenced answers (i.e. references to the literature from the designated specialty reading list) as part of their first recertification period (in addition to the 5 MCQ and PQ that are required for each 5-yearly recertification period).

When the candidate has been credentialed and paid the examination fees they are to forward contact information to the ECZM Examination Committee Chair. This information will be used by the ECZM Examination Committee Chair to provide the candidate with information regarding location, date, and time of the examination as well as any other documentation and information pertinent to the examination.