



## ASSESSMENT POLICY

### 1. Definition and principles underlying implementation

Assessment is the process of attributing value to examined outcomes at Membership and Fellowship level, and includes evaluation of suitability based on attributes implicit in eligibility, training and credentialing requirements. Effective assessment is fair, transparent, valid, reliable and aligned to the standard of examination and learning outcomes being evaluated.

Implementation of this policy will seek to defend the standard implicit in each College qualification, to respect the role and contribution of each contributor to the assessment process, and to act in the best interests of all candidates.

### 2. Scope

This policy will focus on assessment of examination components across Membership and Fellowship subjects.

### 3. Eligibility

- a. Approval to sit Membership / Fellowship examinations is granted at the discretion of Council.
- b. Candidates must meet relevant Membership or Fellowship eligibility requirements and must uphold the College's [Code of Conduct](#) at all times.

### 4. Organisational structures and personnel relevant to assessment

- a. **Examinations and Assistant Examination Officers** – work with examiners, particularly Head Subject Examiners, during preparation and conduct of examinations; this includes providing exam templates for examiners to use and formatting examinations to the College style guidelines, advising candidates on administrative matters associated with examinations, liaison with the Chief Examiner and Examination Committee on all matters associated with examinations and providing a link between the Board of Examiners and the Council, Chapters and members.
- b. **The Chief Examiner (CE)** – responsible for oversight of examination and assessment processes of the College; appointment of examiners on advice from Subject Examinations Committees, Assistant Chief Examiner, Exams and College staff; assisting examiners as required; chairing Board of Examiners; and resolution of conflict or disparity between markers.
- c. **The Assistant Chief Examiner, Examinations (ACE-Ex)** – will assist the examination and assessment processes of the College; assist examiners, as required, at all stages of the examinations process; chair Examination Committee and support the CE.
- d. **The Assistant Chief Examiner, Training (ACE-T)** – has final responsibility for approval of Fellowship candidates' Credentials Documents.
- e. **The Board of Examiners (BoE)** – is expected to ratify results of examinations and implement the College's training and examination system. The Board is composed of the Examination and Training and Credentials committees.

- f. **The Examinations Committee (EC)** - reviews all examination components; provides advice to examiners with written feedback: assists examiners, as required, at all stages of the examinations process; and supports the examination and assessment processes of the College.
- g. **The Training and Credentials Committee (TCC)** – sets standards and expectations for training of Fellowship candidates; reviews training documentation and approves credentials thereby determining eligibility to sit Fellowship examination.
- h. The **Subject Standards Committee (SSC)** is responsible for determining the depth and breadth of each Membership subject and for clearly defining this standard in each subject’s specific set of subject guidelines at Membership and Fellowship level, as described in the [Subject Standards and Subject Examination Committees Terms of Reference](#).\*
- i. The **Subject Examinations Committee (SEC)** is responsible for the design, construct, review and delivery (as appropriate) of the written, practical and oral examinations and marking guides for both Membership and/or Fellowship examinations, as detailed in the Subject Standards and Subject Examination Committees Terms of Reference.\*<sup>1</sup>
- j. The **Head Subject Examiner (HSE)** coordinates a team of examiners who are responsible for producing and delivering an examination that conforms in structure and rigour to the standards defined in the subject guidelines. All examination elements must be blueprinted against subject content, must include an appropriate marking guide, and must be submitted for College review and quality assurance processes in a timely manner. Candidate responses must be marked in accordance with College procedures, detailed in the [Examiners Handbook](#). Further detail on HSE responsibilities is provided in Section 2 of the [Examiners Handbook](#).
- k. Subject **examiners** contribute to the development of questions and the assessment of candidate responses in collaboration with the HSE and BoE.

## 5. Resources for examiners and candidates

- a. [Examiners Handbook](#).
- b. [Membership Candidate Handbook](#).
- c. [Fellowship Candidate Handbook](#).
- d. Resources for examiners (webpage): <https://www.anzcv.org.au/examiners/>
- e. Resources for Membership candidates: <https://www.anzcv.org.au/membership/>
- f. Resources for Fellowship candidates: <https://www.anzcv.org.au/fellowship/>
- g. Resources on oral examinations: <https://www.anzcv.org.au/oral-examination-information-to-assist-candidates/>

## 6. Related policies and procedures<sup>2</sup>

- a. Code of Conduct
- b. Examination Structure Policy
- c. Equitable Assessment Policy
- d. Special Consideration Policy
- e. Conflict of Interest Policy
- f. Appeal Policy

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<sup>1</sup> \*Previously Chapter Examinations Committee (CEC)

<sup>2</sup> All policies referenced to in this document are available from the College website [Policy Library](#)

## 7. Responsibility for Assessment

- a. The relevant College Chapter is responsible for determining subject guidelines including learning outcomes, the internal structure and content of examinations and appropriate standards for training and credentialing at Fellowship level.
- b. Chapter specific requirements must comply with College [Examination Structure Policy](#) and must be accurately described in subject guidelines on the College website.
- c. Examination will be based on subject guidelines current as at 31<sup>st</sup> October in the year preceding the exam.
- d. The Board, through the CE and the ACE-Ex have final authority with regard to examination design and examination delivery.
- e. Subject examiners are responsible for all exam content, including setting appropriate questions, preparation and use of a suitable marking guide and awarding a mark to candidates, according to the College's policies and procedures as detailed in the Examiner Handbook.
- f. All exam components are subjected to review by the SEC Chair and BoE prior to finalising the content, structure and format of the examination, to ensure the College requirements and standards are upheld.
- g. The Board, through the Chief Examiner, is responsible for reviewing the examiners' recommendation on candidate performance, and for determining the final examination outcome.
- h. The Council is responsible for ratifying the recommendation of the Board.
- i. Further information is available in Section 2 of the [Examiner Handbook](#).

## 8. Examination structure and conduct

- a. Each candidate will be assessed by a minimum of two examiners.
- b. Examination components will be blueprinted across subject guidelines to adequately cover the breadth of content examinable within the subject.
- c. Questions should be based on authentic and complex topics, as appropriate to the subject and level of examination (Membership / Fellowship). Preference should be given to questions that assess higher order cognitive processes (problem solving, interpretation, reasoning) above content recall.
- d. Membership examinations are composed of two written papers, an oral exam and, in some chapters, a practical exam.
- e. Fellowship examinations are composed of four components: two written papers, one or more practical exam(s), and an oral exam.
- f. Oral and practical examination components will be conducted in the presence of an observer to ensure that the exam is conducted in a fair and appropriate manner, in accordance with College standards, as described in the subject guidelines, and in a manner that is consistent between candidates. Oral examinations at Fellowship level will be digitally recorded.
- g. Marks for both written papers must be finalised prior to oral / practical examination components.
- h. Further information is available in Examination Structure Policy and the [Examiners Handbook](#).

## 9. Examiners

- a. Examiners must be suitably qualified and experienced for the role, are nominated by the SEC and approved by the Chief Examiner, according to the [Appointment of Examiners](#) Policy.
- b. Examiners are required to:
  - i. Prepare all examination components, including questions of a suitable standard and which conform to College requirements and subject guidelines, and a marking guide;
  - ii. Submit all examination components (questions, marking guide and images) for review to the Chair of the SEC (previously CEC liaison) and to the College office for BoE review in a timely manner, as defined in the current [Examination Timeline](#);
  - iii. Mark examination components in a timely manner, and in accordance with the provided marking guide and College processes detailed in the [Examiner Handbook](#) and in this document (Section 10, below);
  - iv. Enter marks into the College's **Examination Results and Reporting System (ERRS)** and enter into appropriate discussions to moderate marks and ensure variance of examiner marks have been addressed according to relevant College policies, as detailed in Sections 10 and 11;
  - v. Respond constructively to instructions, suggestions and directives of College staff or BoE, and conduct themselves in a professional manner consistent with the [Code of Conduct](#).

## 10. Marking of examination components

- a. Candidate responses are anonymised for marking of written and practical exam components.
- b. Each component is marked independently of all other exam components, based on the examiner's professional judgment and the marking guide constructed prior to the examination.
- c. The marking guide should include, where appropriate, criteria that address the cognitive skills required in an answer, rather than focusing only on detailed lists of information that may be rote learned and reproduced in examinations. In addition to listing specific facts that candidates might include in their responses, examiners are encouraged to identify the qualitative aspects of a desirable response such as completeness, logical structure, prioritisation of information within the answer, exclusion of extraneous and incorrect detail, coherence and consistency of the response, clinical decision making and presentation.
- d. Each response will be marked by two examiners.
- e. Examiners will mark assigned papers or questions independently of other examiner/s.
- f. Each examiner should first read the response and consider, qualitatively, whether the response is a pass or fail.
- g. The examiner should then re-read the response and apply the marking guide for that question.
- h. The mark awarded for the response should match the qualitative impression of candidate response. Where this does not occur, examiners should review the response and reconcile discrepancies between their qualitative and quantitative judgement. If this discrepancy reflects a limitation with the marking guide, changes may be made to the marking guide to address deficiencies. The Examinations Officer must be made aware of changes to the marking guide, and will inform the CE (Fellowship) or ACE-Ex (Membership). Subsequent to alteration of the marking guide, responses from all candidates must be reviewed based on the revised marking guide.
- i. Marks for each question must be entered on the **Examination Results and Reporting System (ERRS)** at least one week prior to practical and oral examinations, to ensure that variances in results can be reconciled and review of results can be addressed by the HSE and, if necessary, BoE.

- j. Discrepancies between examiner pairs must be reconciled by the examiners, with the assistance of the HSE and BoE, if necessary as described in Section 11.

#### 11. Moderation of marks between examiners

- a. Variance in marks between examiners, or between qualitative and quantitative assessment of a question, may flag systemic problems with the question or marking guide and undermine the credibility of the examination process. Where there is a discrepancy between the examiners' qualitative judgement and the marks awarded for any question, the examiners will review the candidate's response to the question and the marks awarded.
- b. Where there is a discrepancy of >10% between marks awarded by the two examiners assigned to question, examiners should review the candidate's response and either adjust one or both marks, or allow the discrepancy to stand.
- c. In the event of a discrepancy of > 20% for any question or question subpart, the HSE shall ask both examiners to remark that question with reference to the marking guide.
- d. If the discrepancy is resolved, the mark and qualitative judgement will stand.
- e. If the discrepancy is not resolved, the examiners shall consult with the HSE and review the question based on the marking guide. If the discrepancy is resolved, the mark and overall judgement will stand.
- f. If the marking guide is considered inadequate or unclear, changes may be made to the marking guide to address deficiencies. Such changes must be communicated to the CE (Fellowship) or ACE-Ex (Membership). Subsequent to alteration of the marking guide, responses from all candidates must be reviewed based on the revised marking guide.
- g. If the discrepancy is not then resolved, the examiners and HSE may review the marking guide and remark the question using the revised marking guide. The Examinations Officer must be made aware of changes to the marking guide, and will inform the CE (Fellowship) or ACE-Ex (Membership). Subsequent to alteration of the marking guide, responses from all candidates must be reviewed based on the revised marking guide.
- h. If, having completed steps c. to g. above, the discrepancy is unresolved, the HSE will advise the BoE of the discrepancy and, under instruction from the BoE, will invoke additional strategies to resolve the discrepancies, which may include a third examiner to mark the examination. The mark recorded for each question will be the two closest marks, and the overall judgement must be consistent with this mark.
- i. Examiners will be required to tender a qualitative assessment of the candidate's performance on each examination component as a whole (overall CLEAR FAIL, MARGINAL FAIL, MARGINAL PASS, CLEAR PASS). Discrepancy between the qualitative overall impression and the numeric result will be reconciled, as described above.

#### 12. Grading of Membership exams

- a. To pass Membership candidates must demonstrate knowledge, competence and experience in a particular area of veterinary practice beyond their primary veterinary degree.
- b. A **pass** grade is awarded to Membership candidates who achieve a mark of  $\geq 70\%$  in all examination components, or who achieve  $\geq 55\%$  in the written or oral component and a combined (overall) result of  $\geq 70\%$ . A **supplementary** exam is awarded to Membership candidates who achieve  $\geq 55\%$  in written or oral exam components,  $\geq 70\%$  in the other component, but  $< 70\%$  overall. A **fail** grade is awarded to candidates who fail to achieve conditions of pass or supplementary.
- c. Supplementary Membership examinations are offered the following year, and must be completed within two years, unless otherwise specified in subject guidelines.

- d. An overall result of  $\geq 70\%$  is required to pass a supplementary exam. The result of the supplementary exam will be combined with the result of the passed component to determine an overall grade: a **pass** grade will be awarded to candidates who achieve a mark of  $\geq 55\%$  in the supplementary component **and** a combined (overall) result of  $\geq 70\%$ . A **fail** grade is awarded to candidates who achieve  $< 55\%$  in the supplementary component, or a combined result of  $< 70\%$ .
- e. Responses of candidates who achieve a marginal result (between 65 and 70% for any examination component or overall result) will be scrutinised by the examiners to ensure the outcome is fair, accurate and represents a consistent standard between candidates, with support from the BoE, as required, and provision for external subject expertise, if required.

### **13. Grading of Fellowship exams**

- a. To pass Fellowship candidates must demonstrate sufficient knowledge and experience in a particular area of veterinary science to entitle him/her to be acknowledged as a specialist or consultant in that area.
- b. All four components of the examination are regarded as separate components for the purposes of assessment. Each submitted exam component is marked independently by the examining team.
- c. Written papers are identified by candidate numbers only, to preserve candidate anonymity.
- d. A **pass** grade is awarded to Fellowship candidates who achieve a mark of  $\geq 70\%$  in all examination components.
- e. Candidates must re-sit all failed examination components.
- f. Candidates are allowed to attempt the examination three times, and all three attempts must occur within a four year period.
- g. Candidates re-sitting failed examination components must sit all remaining examination components at the same time.
- h. Candidates who fail to complete all four examination components within the four year time frame must refresh credentials and sit all four components again.
- i. Responses of candidates who achieve a marginal result (between 67 and 72% for any examination component) will be reviewed by the examiners to ensure the outcome is fair, accurate and represents a consistent standard between candidates, with support from the College, as required, and provision for external subject expertise, if required.

### **14. Equitable Assessment and Extenuating Circumstances Policies**

Candidates who believe that the circumstances, locations or systems of the examination procedures (written, oral and / or practical) do not allow them to fully display their professional knowledge, skills and behaviours, or who are unable to prepare for and complete any or all components of an examination because of a serious medical or critical personal circumstance may apply for alternative assessment arrangements as detailed in the College's [Equitable Assessment Policy](#) (determined by Chief Examiner) or deferral with College retainment of fee, - [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) (determined by Council).

### **15. Confidentiality**

All discussion of examination / assessment / credentialing is confidential. Discussion is restricted to those immediately involved in candidate assessment and no person involved in the process shall divulge to any unauthorised person any information. [[Conflict of Interest policy](#)].

### **16. Appeal Procedure**

Grounds for appeal and mechanisms by which appeals should be conducted and are assessed are detailed in the College's [Appeals Policy](#).