

# Information for the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination

This bulletin contains valuable information regarding the AICP examination. Read it and all forms and communications sent to you carefully before addressing questions to Prometric and AICP.



The American Planning Association's  
professional institute  
**American Institute  
of Certified Planners**

# BULLETIN

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### American Planning Association

The American Planning Association (APA) brings together thousands of people—practicing planners, citizens, elected officials—dedicated to making great communities happen. APA is a nonprofit public interest and education organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. APA’s professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), provides leadership in professional development, ethics, and the standards of planning practice.

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### Prometric

APA works with Prometric to administer the Comprehensive Planning Examination. Prometric is the recognized global leader in testing and assessment services, providing computer-based, Internet, and paper-and-pencil testing solutions. It offers a fully integrated testing system that includes test development, test delivery, and data management capabilities. On behalf of more than 600 current clients in the academic, professional, government, corporate, and information technology markets, Prometric develops and delivers assessments through a global network of testing centers in 131 countries, as well as direct to candidates via the web.

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### AICP Certified Planners

AICP Certified planners are members of APA’s professional institute, AICP. They have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of professional practice and a mastery of theories and tools of planning. To become certified, an APA member must meet requirements for education and experience, pass the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination, and pledge to uphold ethical standards and engage in ongoing professional development. The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct helps certified planners uphold those ethical standards. AICP’s Certification Maintenance program helps them engage in ongoing professional development. Under the Certification Maintenance program, certified planners engage in 32 hours of professional development every two years.

Details about the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct are at [www.planning.org/aicp](http://www.planning.org/aicp).

Details about the Certification Maintenance program are at [www.planning.org/cm](http://www.planning.org/cm).

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE AICP COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EXAMINATION**

The AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination tests the knowledge and skills of candidates eligible for membership in AICP. The examination has been developed by committees of experts in the field of planning with the help of Prometric test specialists. An examination committee oversees the program to ensure its continuing professional relevance.

The examination is administered in a computer-based format at more than 300 Prometric test centers in the United States, Canada and numerous locations internationally. The examination is given during two test windows in May and November. The test deals with basic knowledge areas and the skills of planners. The general content areas of the examination are outlined later in this bulletin. The number of questions from each area of knowledge is distributed randomly throughout the examination.

The examination is made up of 170 multiple choice questions, of which 150 are scored and 20 are sample questions being considered for future examinations and therefore not scored. The exam is timed and candidates are given 3 ½ hours to complete the examination.

To become eligible to sit for the exam, Applicants must submit an application that demonstrates that they have obtained the required combination of education and professional experience. The application consists of three short answer narrative essays through which candidates describe how their work experience fulfills APA's definition of professional planning experience. Applications are reviewed by both APA staff reviewers and a peer reviewer team made up of certified planners who have volunteered their time to help advance the planning profession by fostering the next generation of certified planners.

# AICP CERTIFICATION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements before applying to take the examination:

1. Be a current member of the American Planning Association (APA).
2. Be engaged in professional planning, either currently or in the past, [as defined by AICP](#).
3. **Have completed, at the time of application submission**, one of the combinations of education and corresponding years of professional planning experience listed in the chart below:

Level of Education*	Total Number of Years of Professional Planning Experience Required
Graduate degree in Planning from a program accredited by the PAB**	2
Bachelor's degree in Planning from a program accredited by the PAB**	3
Graduate degree in Planning from a program <i>not</i> accredited by the PAB	3
Any other post-graduate, graduate, or undergraduate degree***	4
No college degree	8

\* The education may be obtained before, during, or after the experience.

\*\* [Accredited degrees](#) have been determined by the Planning Accreditation Board to meet standards approved by the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning or recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners. AICP gives educational credit to applicants holding these degrees if the degree was received (1) during the period the university has been accredited (or previously recognized), and (2) by the time that an application for member is filed. If you are unsure about the status of your planning degree, consult the Planning Accreditation Board's list or contact AICP.

\*\*\* Non-accredited undergraduate planning degrees and degrees in related and other disciplines (i.e. Geography, Architecture, History, Music, etc.) at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

## Application Process Overview

### 1. Bring your APA membership up-to-date

All AICP applicants must be current members of the American Planning Association. Please make sure that your APA and Chapter dues are up-to-date before you start your application.

If your chapter and national dues are not fully paid, your application type will default to one of the application types that apply only to non-members from the state of New Jersey, which cannot be converted to regular applications. If you did happen to start an application/registration prior to making your dues payment, you can change the application type prior to submitting your application.

### 2. Review the requirements for AICP membership

Applicants must be approved for AICP membership before they will be permitted to take the AICP examination. All AICP applicants must meet APA's eligibility requirements for AICP membership before submitting an application for the AICP examination listed on page 6.

### 3. Submit the online application and pay fees

Applications can only be submitted for the upcoming exam window. All applicants must complete and submit the online application along with verifications and pay the application fee by the application deadline posted at [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam). You are strongly encouraged to apply early because applications submitted on or near the deadline may take longer to process due to high volume.

#### 3.1 Upload verification documents

Applicants for the AICP examination must submit verifications for each job and degree listed in the online application. Verifications may be uploaded in PDF format directly in the application. Please be sure to review the requirements for acceptable forms of employment and education verifications and review all of your verification documents for accuracy prior to uploading them to your application. See the Verifications of Employment and Education section on page 18 for full details.

#### 3.2 Application/Exam Fees

The application fee (\$70) and exam fee (\$425) are paid separately via the online form. The \$70 application fee is due upon application submission and the \$425 exam fee payment is due after application approval. Payment must be made online with a credit card.

(Fees subject to change. See website for up-to-date information)

	<b>Application</b> (New Applicants)	<b>Exam</b> (Due After Approval)
U.S. and Canada*	\$70 (non-refundable)	\$425 (non-refundable)
International*	\$70 (non-refundable)	\$530** (non-refundable)

\*Computer-based

\*\*\$425 paid after approval, \$105 invoiced *upon appointment confirmation*

#### 3.2.1 Exam Scholarships

A limited number of reduced fee scholarships are available through the state Chapters. Each Chapter is allotted a minimum of one scholarship. Larger Chapters may have more available. The reduced fee scholarship is for the exam registration fee (\$75 instead of \$425) the application fee still applies and is non-refundable. Receiving a reduced fee scholarship does not guarantee approval of an application. To learn more about the requirements,

please contact your Chapter PDO.

### 3.3 GI Bill Exam Reimbursement

Congress passed a revision to the GI Bill Education program in March 2001 that includes additional licensing and certification examinations. AICP submitted an application to have its certification credential included, and the application was approved in December 2002.

This means that military veterans (and their surviving dependents) who are also approved AICP applicants (meaning they have paid the registration fee to AICP and taken the exam), can now ask the Veterans Administration to reimburse them the fee.

Veterans interested in the GI Bill Education Benefits Program may find information about reimbursement for the AICP exam at [www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing\\_certification.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp).

You may also send an e-mail to [AICPexam@planning.org](mailto:AICPexam@planning.org).

### 3.4 Your Application Type

Be sure to select the correct application type. If you submit an incorrect application type for your situation (i.e., if you live in Texas and submit a New Jersey application) APA staff will not be able to change it during this exam cycle, and your only option will be to transfer your application to the next exam window and wait for review/approval/testing.

## 4. Wait for a notification e-mail

Normal processing and review time is approximately 8-10 weeks; however, this is a rough estimate and some applications will take longer to review than others. If you apply during the Early-Bird Application Window you will be notified of application approval or denial by the Early-Bird Notification Deadline (see the Early-Bird Application Window section below for more details). All other applicants will be notified of application approval or denial by the Final Notification Deadline (relevant deadlines are posted at [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam) as they are set). Please note that applications submitted on or near the application deadline may take longer to process and review. Once your application is reviewed, your application status will be updated in [My APA](#) and you will receive an e-mail notifying you of your application approval or an emailed letter notifying you of application denial.

## 5. Schedule with Prometric

Approved applicants must register for the exam to receive an Eligibility ID after the \$425 exam fee has been paid. The Eligibility ID will include instructions for scheduling the appointment to take the examination at a Prometric testing center of the applicant's choice (choosing a test date, start time, and test center location). Proper photo ID is required to enter the test center (see the Identification Requirements section on page 26).

## Early-Bird Application Window

There are 2 benefits to using the Early-Bird Application Window. One is that early bird applicants who are disapproved will have an opportunity to revise their application, according to the advice provided in their denial letter, and resubmit their application in the same exam window. The second is early notification of your application status.

*Re-submittal of disapproved applications:* The revised application must be resubmitted before the deadline conveyed in the denial letter in order to be considered for the same application window. All re-applicants will be notified of the outcome of the second review by the final notification deadline. **A second submission of a revised application in the same window does not guarantee an approval.**

*Early notification of application status:* Applicants who submit their application and valid verifications by the Early-Bird Deadline will be considered Early-Bird applicants. Early-Bird applicants receive the benefit of early notification of application approval or denial by the Early-Bird Notification Deadline (relevant deadlines are posted at



[www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam) as they are set). Early-Bird applicants who do not receive approval or denial notification by this date will be contacted and informed that their application requires additional review. Applicants in this situation will be given first priority in the review queue and will receive their approval or denial notice shortly thereafter.

Early-Bird applicants who submit a revised application will receive the final determination for their application status by the Final Notification deadline. Please refer to the exam application schedule posted at <https://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam>.

**NOTES:** Applicants who submit their application before the Early-Bird Application Deadline but do not submit valid verification materials in time to be reviewed with the other Early-Bird applicants will be treated as regular applicants. Applicants who submit their application before the Early-Bird Application Deadline but submit invalid employment or education verifications will be disqualified as Early-Bird applicants and treated as regular applicants.

### **Application Lifespan (Returning Applicants)**

The AICP examination is given during two exam windows of 14 days each in May and November. Approved applications have a lifespan of three years, the equivalent of six consecutive exam windows. During the five subsequent exam windows you are considered a returning applicant and you do not need to reapply. Instead, you will need to register your intent to take the examination by paying the exam fee before the registration deadline (see [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam) for deadlines). After an application expires (after six exam windows or three years) you must reapply even if you never took the examination. This includes submitting a new application, providing updated employment and education verifications, and waiting for application review and approval. **A previous approval does not guarantee a second approval.**

### **Incomplete Applications**

If you receive notice that your application is incomplete and your application status changes from Pending to Incomplete, this is the final status for your application for the exam cycle. Candidates whose applications are incomplete can reapply for the next exam cycle.

If you receive notice that your application is incomplete, please review your [My APA](#) page to determine why your application is incomplete (i.e. problems with verifications received or missing verifications). In most cases there will be a message that will give an indication of what is wrong with a particular verification document (not on letterhead, no job description, no dates of employment, not an official transcript, un-notarized diploma, etc.) Additionally, incomplete applications do not undergo a review of the criteria responses as the education and/or employment information provided could not be verified by staff. If your application was marked as Incomplete prior to the November 2014 exam window, you must edit your criterion responses as Criteria 1 and 3 were combined so there are now only three criteria to address instead of four. The new Criterion 1 text box will feature both the former Criterion 1 and 3 responses. Please refer to the Does My Experience Qualify section on page 13 for more information.

If it is unclear what is wrong with your verifications or why your application is incomplete, please contact AICP staff for assistance at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) or 312-431-9100.

### **Denied Applications**

Denied applicants will receive notification via email. The email will include an attached letter that addresses the specific reasons behind the denial decision. If you receive notice that your application has been denied, that is the final decision for the current exam cycle. One exception to this is for Early Bird applications, please see page 8 for details. Depending on your situation, you may need to wait to gain more professional planning experience, or simply reapply with a new application containing more focused criteria responses that better describe how your work experience meets the professional planning experience criteria required in the application. Your application will remain in our files, so if you choose to reapply, the online form will pre-populate with your previous application information.

## Important Information for Previously Denied Applicants

In order to help applicants provide the strongest possible documentation of their planning experience, APA reorganized part of the application form and clarified the instructions. Applicants are required to address the same criteria as before, but they do so in three sections instead of four.

When you open the online application for the exam, it will automatically repopulate with the information you supplied previously. Your responses to previous Criteria 1 and 3 will be combined in one text box for the revised Criterion 1. If your application was denied based on your response to Criterion 1, Criterion 3, or both you must provide a revised response to the new Criterion 1. Criterion 1 now requires applicants to demonstrate a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process appropriate to the project or situation. See page 13 for more information.

As of the May 2015 exam window, the AICP exam application requires members to satisfy the criteria requirements in a single set of essays that pulls from experience earned throughout the member's career. Applicants should select a project example from their planning career that best exemplifies the requirements in a given criterion to complete this section of the application. If you have an approved criterion 1, 2 and 3 from a formerly submitted application, you may be approved for the AICP exam based on the new policy. Please see page 13 for more information.

## Appeals

Denied applicants have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals are reviewed by the AICP Membership Standards Committee in time to allow members with overturned denials to sit for the same exam period for which they applied.

If you decide to appeal, please write a professional appeal letter that explains why you think the application reviewers were incorrect in their assessment of your application. Please note that supplemental examples and materials will not be accepted as part of your appeal. You must demonstrate how your existing criterion responses meet the requirements. Appeals that include new responses will not be accepted.

If you wish to appeal, please write a letter addressing the denial reasons cited in your denial letter and e-mail it to [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) by the deadline specified in your denial letter. An APA staff member will contact you via email once a decision has been reached.

### Guidelines for Appeal Letters

DO carefully review the denial statement provided and address each point of denial in your appeal letter.

DO cite specific information from your criterion response(s) and articulate how it meets the requirements outlined in the 'Does My Experience Qualify?' section on page 13.

DO provide additional insight and perspective into the denied criterion response. This is your opportunity to clarify your response and demonstrate how it does meet the criterion requirements.

## Candidates Outside of the United States and Canada

The examination is administered in a computer-based format to candidates outside of the United States and Canada during the same May and November testing windows. The examination can be administered at Prometric international sites or prearranged sites such as embassies or universities. Prometric may require up to 60 days' notice to make arrangements for an international exam, so candidates who wish to take the examination outside the United States and Canada should apply early and contact AICP staff at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) as soon as they receive notice of application approval with their APA ID number, the country and city they wish to take the test in, and at least 2 available dates and times available.

Please note that candidates who request international testing must pay a non-refundable \$105 fee in addition to the standard \$425 exam fee. (The additional fee will be collected as arrangements for international testing are made).

Candidates who request an international exam are not eligible for a transfer to another exam window after the request for international testing is made.

## **Special Testing Arrangements**

Candidates with documented visual, physical, hearing, or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking an examination under standard conditions may request special testing accommodations and arrangements.

Prometric requires written documentation of the disability from the candidate's doctor or another qualified medical professional. This written documentation should specify the accommodations needed by the applicant and must be emailed to APA Staff at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) prior to making an exam appointment. There is no extra fee for making these arrangements.

In considering a request from an applicant for special accommodations, APA and Prometric are guided by a sense of fairness. Special accommodations are granted to give a candidate the opportunity to be tested in an equivalent manner with other candidates, but not to provide an advantage over other candidates.

A list of pre-approved personal items for Testing Accommodations can be found on the Prometric website: [www.prometric.com/en-us/for-test-takers/prepare-for-test-day/documents/Permissible-items.pdf](http://www.prometric.com/en-us/for-test-takers/prepare-for-test-day/documents/Permissible-items.pdf).

## **Additional Application Information**

Complete the examination application online at the APA website at [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam). Before you begin the application process, please note the following:

1. Apply as early as possible before the scheduled deadline date. If you did not meet the deadline date for the upcoming exam window, you may apply for the next exam window. For more information please visit [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam).
2. It is very important that you complete the application form carefully and accurately. The contact information in your application should match the information in your APA record. AICP and Prometric will use the information you provide on this form to deliver your Eligibility ID and to inform you of your test results. Also, please make sure the name on your application matches the photo identification you will present at the test center (see Identification Requirements on page 26).
3. By submitting the online application, you are authorizing Prometric to release your scores to APA.

## Application Status Key

Due to the high volume of applications APA receives around the submission deadline, it may take up to 10 weeks to review your application. During the review process, APA provides status updates on submitted applications to inform members of where their application is in the review process. A member can view their application status in [My APA](#). Applicants are responsible for checking the status of their application.

Below are the possible application statuses and their meaning.

Status	Meaning	Definition
A	Approved	Your application was approved. APA will email you with your ATT code soon after receiving your approval notice which will enable you to schedule your exam appointment.
D	Denied	Your application was denied. APA will email you with notification and your denial letter detailing the reasons for denial. A refund of \$425 will be issued back to the original payment credit card 30 days from receiving your denial notice.
P	Pending	Your completed application has been submitted and received by APA.
I	Incomplete	Your application was found to be incomplete. APA will email you with notification that explains why your application is incomplete and a refund of \$425 will be issued back to the original payment credit card.
V_C	Verification Complete	Your verification documents were reviewed and validated. Your application will move forward into the review process.
R	Under Review	Your application is under review and APA will email you with your final application status by the final notification deadline.
N	Not Yet Submitted	An application was started but has not been submitted.

## Lapsed AICP Members

Former AICP members whose membership lapsed *and who are not eligible for reinstatement* must sit for the AICP exam to re-establish certification. These members will be pre-approved to sit for the exam and are not required to write the criteria responses or provide verification of education or employment. Lapsed AICP members must contact APA staff at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) prior to starting an application to ensure the pre-approved status is in place.

# DEMONSTRATING PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE ON THE APPLICATION

Please read the information below carefully before you begin your online application. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to make use of the Applicant Response Checklist, included as an Appendix to this Guide, to help ensure their criterion essay responses meet the requirements described below.

## Does My Experience Qualify?

In addition to meeting education and employment eligibility requirements, individuals applying to take the AICP exam must demonstrate that they have engaged in professional planning experience that qualifies them for certification. Applicants do this by demonstrating that their qualifications satisfy the established criteria that together define professional planning experience.

The information provided here details the professional planning experience criteria listed in the exam application and offers guidance on addressing each criterion.

## General Instructions

- Applicants must address each AICP professional planning criterion from experience earned throughout their career.
- Applicants must provide unique responses with specific examples that demonstrate how their planning experience satisfies each of the professional planning criteria. Identical responses for different criteria will not be accepted.
- Each response must be between 250 and 500 words.
- Applicants offering experience in narrowly focused places of work should take particular care in showing how that experience satisfies each of the criteria.
- Applicants should specify their role and provide an example of work performed in each project or plan mentioned.

Applicants who are uncertain about their eligibility for certification based on employment experience should review the [AICP Certification Exam FAQ](#).

## Professional Planning Experience Criteria

The following criteria define professional planning experience. While the criteria are more likely to be met while employed in an agency (private or government), institute, or firm engaged in comprehensive planning, instruction, or research, such employment is not a prerequisite.

Professional planning experience — whether acquired through practice, teaching, or research — must appropriately address all of the following criteria.

### 1. INVOLVE A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS WHILE APPLYING A PLANNING PROCESS APPROPRIATE TO THE PROJECT OR SITUATION

Professional urban, rural, and regional planning applies the classic process appropriate to the situation. The process involves a number of steps, including problem/opportunity definition, goal setting, generating alternates, selection of an alternative, implementation, and evaluation. A professional planning process should be oriented toward the future, examine unintended consequences as well as intended ones, and identify implementation options that include identification of resources and resource constraints. A clear process should be evident in the quality of research, analysis, and teaching (if applicable); process should also guide the format of the planning policy or program. Professional urban, rural, and regional planners also involve a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness, demonstrating initiative, judgment, substantial involvement, and personal accountability when defining and preparing significant substantive elements of planning activities.

Discuss both how you applied a planning process appropriate to the situation through one of the three sections of professional planning content listed below AND how you were a responsible and resourceful professional when

applying that process. You should focus your response on the single portion of Criterion 1 that is most applicable to your work experience at the position in question.

### **Criterion 1 DOs and DON'Ts**

**DO** focus your response on the section of Criterion 1 most applicable to your work experience (1.1, 1.2, or 1.3). **DON'T** provide answers for all three sections of Criterion 1.

**DO** use a specific project example to illustrate your application of a planning process by describing the steps of that process, making your role and responsibilities clear. **DON'T** simply list different types of planning processes that you have applied; instead, illustrate how you have applied a planning process by describing the steps of that process in your response.

**DO** use a project example that demonstrates your involvement in significant substantive elements of planning activities; see the lists of plan making and implementation processes and functional areas of practice. **DON'T** use examples that involve pre-professional or administrative experience.

**DO** focus your response on the project steps for which you were responsible, clearly describe your involvement in the process, and make the connection between the steps you describe and how they demonstrate that you were a responsible and resourceful professional. **DON'T** simply describe a project without making the connection to how it demonstrates that you were a responsible and resourceful professional.

**DO** write about yourself in the first person and discuss only projects tied to positions for which you have provided verification on your application. **DON'T** write your response in the third person or provide an example from a position not listed on your application.

**1.1 Plan Making and Implementation** was designed for applicants in professional practice who develop, implement, and enforce plans on a regular basis. AICP maintains that the list below exemplifies typical experiences of planners eligible for certification. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and applicants are not required to address every activity listed in this section. Applicants should focus their response on the strongest examples which demonstrate how their employment meets the criterion of applying an appropriate planning process in practice.

- Visioning and goal setting
- Demographics and economics
- Land use and development regulations
- Application of legal principles
- Growth management techniques
- Budgets and financing options
- Development plan and project review
- Program evaluation
- Communications techniques
- Intergovernmental relationships
- Stakeholder relationships
- Project and program management

**1.2 Functional Areas of Practice** was designed for applicants who practice in specialized fields within the profession who may not create, implement, and enforce plans on a regular basis. AICP maintains that the list below exemplifies typical functional areas of practice of planners eligible for certification. The list is not intended to be exhaustive. Applicants should focus their response on the functional areas of practice that best demonstrate how their employment meets the criterion of applying an appropriate planning process in practice.

- Community development
- Comprehensive or long-range planning
- Economic development and revitalization
- Educational, institutional, or military facilities
- Energy policy
- Food systems planning
- Hazard mitigation and disaster planning
- Historic preservation
- Housing
- Infrastructure

- Labor force and employment
- Land use and transportation
- Natural resources, and the environment
- Parks, open space, and recreation
- Planning law
- Policy planning
- Public services
- Social and health services
- Urban design

**1.3 Research, Analysis, and Teaching** was designed for applicants in academia or research institutions who are not practicing planners, but who conduct and publish planning research or teach planning related courses. Section 1.3.1 can also apply to applicants with significant experience in research and data analysis as well. Applicants should focus their response on the strongest examples that demonstrate how their employment meets the criterion of applying an appropriate planning process in research, analysis, and teaching.

#### **1.3.1 Research and Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative research methods; Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data; Economic analysis and forecasting; Environmental analysis; Spatial analysis and geographic information systems (GIS); Policy analysis and decision making; Design and implementation of research initiatives; Design and implementation of surveys; Professional literature search of best practices. The response should include the prime purpose of the research, the stage of the research, the organizational context of the research, and how the research affects the implementation of urban and regional planning policy.

**NOTE:** Relevant independent research undertaken towards a master's or doctorate degree is eligible, provided the following: the master's or doctorate degree is in a department of urban and regional planning, and the research cannot be part of course work that is counted toward a degree or a requirement for a degree (AICP requires that education and experience remain separate entities).

#### **1.3.2 Teaching**

Experience should focus on the activities described in the sections of professional planning content above (Plan Making and Implementation; Functional Areas of Practice; and Research and Analysis). Courses should focus on urban, rural, and regional planning or apply to interest groups or community groups in the context of policy engagement. Teaching activities may include course development (lesson plans), instruction, research, or writing scholarly papers.

## **2. DEMONSTRATE A COMPREHENSIVE POINT OF VIEW WHEN IMPLEMENTING PROFESSIONAL PLANNING TASKS**

Professional urban, rural, and regional planners employ a comprehensive point of view when implementing professional planning tasks. A comprehensive point of view means looking at multiple consequences of a planning-based decision as it affects various aspects of a community's quality of life (e.g., physical, social, environmental, and economic).

To meet the requirements of the criterion, applicants must demonstrate through their response how they have applied a comprehensive point of view in their planning practice, as defined above. Applicants should discuss how they considered multiple issues or consequences of their planning work and the potential impacts of proposed decisions or projects, demonstrating that they understand the big-picture implications of their planning work on the communities they serve.

Examples of issues or areas to be discussed may include:

- Environmental issues or considerations
- Economic impacts
- Social or equity issues or concerns
- Connections across various spatial context (e.g. from regional to local, from urban to suburban)
- Intergovernmental cooperation between neighboring jurisdictions and broader geographic areas
- Consistency across multiple policies, actions, or systems
- Stakeholder concerns

## Criterion 2 DOs and DON'Ts

**DO** demonstrate consideration of the multiple consequences that a decision may have on a variety of aspects of a community's quality of life (environmental, economic, social, physical, etc.), as defined by the criterion.

**DO** make the connection to your own use of a comprehensive point of view (i.e., consideration of the consequences of planning decisions) in the example you provide. **DON'T** simply describe a project (such as a comprehensive plan), discuss larger spatial contexts, or describe working with stakeholders without addressing how you considered multiple impact of your planning work on the community's quality of life.

**DO** use a specific project example that clearly identifies a project, policy, action of other planning-based decision to demonstrate how you personally have used a comprehensive point of view in your work, especially if your work was done as part of a team. **DON'T** talk generally or aspirationally about the importance of using a comprehensive point of view.

**DO** write about yourself in the first person and discuss only projects tied to positions for which you provided verification on your application. **DON'T** write your response in the third person or provide an example from a position not listed on your application.

### 3. INFLUENCE PUBLIC DECISION MAKING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The primary obligation of professional urban, rural, and regional planners is to serve the public interest. To fulfill this obligation, planners act as leaders during the planning process, working with elected and appointed officials toward the goal of creating communities of lasting value. Planners' input, direction, and guidance influences those with decision-making authority to make decisions that are in the best interests of the public. Discuss how you have influenced public decision making in the public interest in a given position.

**NOTE:** For those planners in academia and not practice, focus your response on how your work (studios, lecture materials, publications) promotes decision making in the public interest.

**DO** clearly indicate the decision-making authority with whom you are working (e.g. boards, elected officials, and others with decision-making authority) and how you have influenced them through your work. **DON'T** simply discuss working with the public without making the connection to your influence on the decision making of elected or appointed officials.

## Part Time Experience

Part-time professional planning experience may be used toward meeting the minimum eligibility requirements. Part-time experience will be prorated into a full-time equivalent. For example, if an applicant worked 20 hours/week for six months that would equate to three months of professional planning experience.

Similarly, persons working full time but only part time on planning related activities may also prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. See the Experience in Related Fields or Professions section for more details.

## Internship Experience

AICP will consider internships (or any work completed while enrolled in a degree program) towards the professional planning experience requirement provided that the following stipulations are met:

- The internship cannot be part of course work for a grade or for course credit (AICP requires that education and experience remain separate entities). This must be documented in your employment verification letter.



- The work as an intern meets the four criteria for professional planning experience listed in the AICP application.

## **Non-Traditional Professional Planning Experience**

While AICP's professional planning criteria are more likely to be met in an agency (private or government), institute, or firm engaged in comprehensive planning, instruction, or research, this is not a prerequisite. Persons with non-traditional professional-level planning experience are encouraged to apply if they can demonstrate how their experience meets the criteria for professional planning experience listed in the AICP application.

### **What do we mean by "non-traditional professional" planning experience?**

Applicants submitting non-traditional professional planning experience should ensure that the experience meets the definition of professional-level planning experience (involves a high level of personal responsibility and substantive technical accomplishments). Examples include unpaid work or work done in a volunteer capacity.

For example, volunteer work at a Community Organization would not usually be considered professional planning experience if the applicant was only responsible for setting up meetings, processing development and zoning applications, providing general customer service, etc. However, the experience may be considered to be at a professional level if the applicant was also involved with or responsible for:

- The preparation of research and documents;
- The supervision of projects;
- The presentation of proposals and plans before decision-making bodies;
- Providing significant input in one or more facets of a project (e.g. giving technical expertise in areas such as computer application, strategy development, impact analysis, etc.)

## **Experience in Related Fields or Professions**

There are important distinctions between planners and allied professionals and planning and related fields. Planners approach problems comprehensively, have a long-range perspective, and deal with unique place-based issues. Although people in related professions (e.g., law, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, etc.) and disciplines (humanities, psychology, etc.) often work with planners, they do not necessarily have the same knowledge, skillset, and approach. Those in related professions and disciplines who can demonstrate that their experience meets the professional level planning experience requirements (as defined in the Exam Candidate Bulletin) are welcome to apply.

Persons working full-time, but devoting a portion of their time to another field, may prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. For example, a position in which an environmental planner worked 40 hours/week for two years and devoted half her time to environmental science and half her time to professional planning may prorate that experience into the full-time equivalent of one year of professional planning experience.

While contributions by members of city councils, boards of commissioners, planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, and citizen advisory boards are invaluable to the advancement of planning, service on such a body, by itself, does not constitute professional planning experience.

## VERIFICATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Applicants for the AICP examination must submit verifications for each job and degree listed in the online application. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that acceptable verifications are received by APA. Unverified experience and degrees will not be considered.

Applicants must upload verification documents in PDF format directly in the application. Your goal should be to make sure that you've received all of your verification documents prior to beginning your application.

**NOTE:** Any verification uploaded through the application must be a PDF of the original printed document. APA will not accept verifications submitted to APA via post mail, e-mail or fax (unless special permission is given by APA staff).

**IMPORTANT:** Review all verification documents for accuracy prior to submission. You are responsible for ensuring that your verification documents meet requirements. Verifications that contain inaccurate information or that do not meet requirements may cause a delay in application review or lead to an incomplete application for the exam cycle (see Incomplete Applications on page 9).

### Employment Verification Letters

Employment verification letters are used to verify the professional planning experience claimed by the applicant in the online application. The signed letter, on department/company letterhead, should come from either an immediate supervisor, principal of the firm, or human resources department.

#### Each letter must include:

- Your name,
- Your APA ID number (provided by you to the employer)
- Your position/title,
- Your dates of employment (e.g. February 2000 through November 2005) and
- A brief summary of your duties as a professional planner.
- The name, title, and phone number of the letter writer should also be noted.

A sample employment verification letter is available online at: [www.planning.org/certification/pdf/samplejobverification.pdf](http://www.planning.org/certification/pdf/samplejobverification.pdf)

### Additional Requirements:

**Current Employment:** If the letter is verifying current employment, the letter **must be dated**. Employment verification letters can only be used to verify experience up through the day they were written.

**Part-time Employment:** The dates of part-time employment must be specified in your verification letter (e.g. full-time February 2000 through November 2005 and part-time December 2005 through March 2006). Unless otherwise specified in the employment verification letter, part-time experience is assumed to be 50% of full-time experience.

**Multiple Positions:** Letters verifying multiple positions at the same company must address each position separately (i.e. position/title, dates of employment, and summary of duties).

**Intern Experience:** Verifications for intern experience must confirm that the experience was not completed for academic credit and was not part of coursework for a grade (i.e. that the experience was separate from your education). This includes any work completed while working toward a degree, even if your actual title was not "intern."

**Letter Author:** All employment verifications must come from the actual employer. If your former immediate supervisor is no longer employed with the organization, the verification letter must be written either by human resources or the principal of the firm. Employment verification letters written by a former immediate supervisor now working for another organization will not be accepted.

**Defunct Employer:** If your former employer has gone out of business or no longer exists, you will still be required to

provide acceptable verification for the experience. Applicants in this situation should contact AICP staff for assistance. Unverified experience will not be considered.

### **Employment Verification Letters for Principals and Consultants**

Some applicants for the AICP exam who work as independent consultants or as principals of their own small firms may not have an employer or human resources department to write an employment verification letter. Applicants in this situation will need to provide a letter that contains the information required in the standard employment verification letter, as well as a project-client list that includes:

- Your role in each project,
- The dates that you were involved in each project, and
- Client contact information for each project (minimum of contact individual and phone number).\*

**This option is only for individuals who do not have an employer to verify their experience. Principals of large firms who have a human resources department to verify employment should submit the standard employment verification letter.**

\*APA will not use the client contact information for any other purpose than to confirm your work experience.

### **Education Verifications**

Education verifications are used to confirm that the applicant has received their degree, when the degree was conferred, and if the degree was in Planning. The degree must already be conferred at the time you submit the online application (i.e. have your diploma in hand), and reviewers will only consider degrees for which APA has received acceptable verifications. APA will accept education verifications in one of the following three forms:

- Official transcript \*
- Notarized photocopy of diploma \*\*
- Letter from school dean, registrar, or program director confirming that degree was conferred \*\*\*

\*Please open sealed transcripts, scan them, and save them as a PDF. \*\* The Notary Public is confirming the copy is a true replica of the original diploma. \*\*\* The letter must be printed on school/university letterhead and include the letter writer's title and contact information.

**Note on planning degrees:** Your verification must confirm that your degree is in Planning (if applicable). Otherwise, you will be subject to the eligibility requirements for applicants with non-planning degrees.

## APPLICATION TIPS

**Tip 1** It pays to apply early: If you apply during the early bird window and your application is denied, you can address the issues and re-apply in the same exam window. This opportunity is available only for early bird applicants, so make sure to apply by the early bird registration deadline.

The majority of applicants apply right before the registration deadline. The volume of applications received at this time means more applications to review and a longer wait time to receive your status. Testing centers fill up, and you may have difficulty finding one with availabilities. Apply early to avoid these stresses.

**Tip 2** To ensure your verification letters will be accepted, provide your references with a copy of the [sample job verification letter](#).

**Tip 3** Acceptable ways to verify your educational experience include:

- Providing a notarized diploma(s)
- Providing an official transcript(s) from your university
- Providing a letter from the university confirming your degree and graduation date on letterhead.

**Tip 4** A complete job history is not required. Focus on providing only enough experience to meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements, as defined on page 6.

**Tip 5** Internship experience can count toward professional planning experience as long as the internship was not part of course work for a grade and the work experience meets the criteria for professional planning experience listed in the AICP application.

**Tip 6** Part-time professional planning experience can count toward professional planning experience. Simply prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. Similarly, persons working full time, but devoting a portion of their time to another field, may also prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent.

**Tip 7** When responding to the AICP professional planning criteria:

- Read the "dos and don'ts" guidance provided on pages 13-15, which describes each of the criteria that your responses must meet to be accepted as professional planning experience, and use the Applicant Response Checklist provided as an Appendix in this Guidebook to help make sure your responses meet criteria requirements.
- Provide unique responses for each criterion.
- Use the word "I" and speak directly to your role and responsibilities related to the project work described. Do not write about yourself in the third person.
- Move beyond a discussion of project details and outcomes to discuss your role on the project(s) described.
- Do not include information that does not qualify as professional planning experience.
- Do not include information in the criterion responses that is not tied to the positions needed to meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements. The duties and projects included in the responses must be related to the positions verified.
- Planning is a collaborative process, but make sure you do not speak entirely about what the team accomplished. Exam reviewers need to be able to determine your role on the projects described.

**Tip 8** Proofread your responses. Spelling and grammar errors can make it difficult for exam reviewers to evaluate the content of the responses.

**Tip 9** Project managers or people with substantial experience in the field sometimes take for granted the application process. APA is concerned not only with the number of years of planning experience, but also with making sure the experience meets the established professional planning criteria. Experienced applicants should take care in making sure their responses meet each established professional planning criterion. For example, managers or directors should use examples that demonstrate their planning experience, not their administrative or managerial responsibilities, when responding to Criteria 1 and 2.

# SCHEDULING TEST APPOINTMENTS

## Test Center Locations

All U.S. and Canadian candidates may schedule, reschedule and cancel appointments online at [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp). Please note that center locations change infrequently. The website lists current test center locations, contact information for each site, and directions.

## Where to Take the Examination

Test centers are located domestically and internationally. Review the test center list online at [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp) and select the most convenient city, regardless of whether it is in the state where you live. Prometric will make every effort to assign you to the center of your choice. There may be times, however, when more examinees apply for one center than can be accommodated. Examination candidates who attempt to schedule at a test center already at capacity will have the opportunity to select another date within the exam window or a test center as near as possible to the requested location.

International testers must contact APA staff to coordinate an exam appointment.

## Scheduling Your Examination Appointment

Candidates whose applications are approved will receive an Eligibility ID after the exam fee has been paid. This will contain instructions for how to set up your exam appointment during the testing window. You must have your Eligibility ID in order to schedule an appointment to take the examination. Candidates must take the examination during the testing window indicated on the Eligibility ID email. Schedule your appointment in one of the following ways:

- First, attempt to schedule your appointment on Prometric's website at [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp). This site also includes directions to the test centers.
- If you are unable to schedule your appointment online, call either Prometric's Candidate Service Call Center (CSCC) at 800-7969853 or the Prometric test center of your choice.

**NOTE:** Most candidates should schedule their exam appointment online at [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp). Prometric's online scheduling system is the most accurate, efficient, and effective way to ensure a candidate gets his or her first choice for an exam appointment. However, candidates who need to make special testing arrangements under ADA rule should first contact AICP staff to make sure the special accommodations request has been communicated to Prometric, and then schedule via telephone with Prometric's CSCC at 800967-1139 (see Special Testing Arrangements on page 10). International exam candidates will need to work with Prometric to make arrangements for an international testing. AICP staff will help facilitate this process (see Candidates Outside of the United States and Canada on page 10).

Additionally:

- You must make your appointment at least 48 hours before the test window opens.
- The AICP examination is not the only examination administered at the Prometric testing centers, and seats fill quickly.
- Make sure you have your Eligibility ID on hand when you make your appointment because you will be asked to supply your candidate identification number.
- If you lose your Eligibility ID, contact APA at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) to request a duplicate authorization.
- Individual test center hours of operation typically range from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Saturday hours vary by test center.
- If your first test center choice is unavailable, you will be offered an alternative as close as possible to your first choice.
- Once your examination has been scheduled, you will receive a confirmation number via e-mail. You will not receive a confirmation of your appointment by regular mail. Do not lose this number as you will need it if you need to make any changes to your appointment (see Changes to Your Test Appointment on page 24).
- If you require directions to the Prometric testing center, you can connect to the Prometric automated direction line, 800-7969853, or visit Prometric's website at [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp) for door-to-door directions.

## Additional Scheduling Information

1. Eligibility ID: Approved and pre-approved applicants will receive an Eligibility ID after the exam fee has been paid. The Eligibility ID will include instructions on locating and scheduling your appointment. Eligibility ID's for a particular testing window are not released until the previous window has passed and all administrative reporting has been completed.
2. Review your Eligibility ID carefully. Be certain all information is correct. This will facilitate rapid and efficient processing at your test appointment. Contact APA at 312-431-9100 or e-mail [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) if you need a correction.
3. Prometric will charge APA for the number of candidates who schedule an appointment to test. If after scheduling an appointment, you do not take the examination during the assigned testing window, you will be required to pay the exam fee again in order to be rescheduled for the next testing window (see No Show Policy on page 24).
4. Please note that if you sign up for the exam, you are expected to sit for the test during that exam window. If you do not schedule an appointment to test and are not approved for a transfer to the next exam window by the relevant deadline, you will forfeit your full exam fee (see If You Never Schedule an Appointment on page 25).

## TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENT CHANGES

The following policies apply to rescheduling your test appointment within the same exam window or transferring to the following exam window. For a May window, the following exam window is November of the same calendar year. For a November window, the following exam window is May of the next calendar year.

### Changes to Your Test Appointment (within the same exam window)

To change an appointment date/time within the same exam window, you must cancel your scheduled appointment and reschedule your appointment through Prometric. Log onto [www.prometric.com/aicp](http://www.prometric.com/aicp) or contact the test center directly by noon (ET) at least two full business days prior to your scheduled appointment. Please note that Prometric will collect a \$35 fee for cancelling or rescheduling an exam appointment 2-29 days before the scheduled test date (see the chart below for more information). You will not be permitted to cancel or reschedule your appointment if you miss this deadline (see No Show Policy below). Leaving a message on an answering machine is not an acceptable method of canceling or rescheduling your appointment to test. There is no fee to cancel or reschedule your exam appointment if you do so 30 or more days before your test date. Please see the chart below for more information.

Cancellation / Rescheduling Policy	
Time Period	Fee
30 or more days before the test date	None
2-29 days before the scheduled test date	\$35 (to be collected by Prometric from candidate)
Less than 2 days before the test date	Full exam fee payment
Fail to appear for the scheduled test	Full exam fee payment
15 minutes after the scheduled start time on the test date and is refused entry	Full exam fee payment

### Transfers to the Next Exam Window

Candidates who register to take the AICP examination are expected to test during the upcoming exam window. However, you are allowed to transfer to the following exam window within the 6 cycle pre-approved application. A \$100 transfer fee must be paid online when you register for the next consecutive exam (e.g., if you transfer your May 2015 exam registration, you must pay the \$100 transfer fee when registering for the November 2015 exam). To request a transfer to the following exam window:

1. You cannot have a testing appointment scheduled with Prometric at the time that you request a transfer. If you already have a test appointment scheduled, you must cancel the appointment (see Changes to Your Test Appointment above).
2. You must request the transfer by APA's transfer deadline. If you do not request a transfer by APA's transfer deadline, you must either test or forfeit your exam fee (see Refunds below). APA's transfer deadline is posted at [www.planning.org/certification/currentexam](http://www.planning.org/certification/currentexam).
3. You must pay the \$100 transfer fee when registering for the next consecutive exam.

Submit transfer requests to [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) and include your name and APA ID number. Transfer requests submitted after the transfer deadline or submitted while you still have a test appointment scheduled will not be accepted.

### No Show Policy

You will be considered a "no show" and will forfeit your full exam fee if:

- You miss your scheduled appointment.
- You cancel with Prometric less than two full business days prior to your scheduled appointment.
- You arrive 15 minutes or more past your scheduled appointment time.
- You do not bring acceptable ID with you to the test center and are denied admission (see Identification



Requirements on page 26).

In the cases listed above, you will not be allowed to reschedule your examination within the current exam window, you will forfeit all fees paid, and you must remit another full exam fee to register for a future exam window.

### **If You Never Schedule an Appointment**

Candidates who register to take the AICP examination must schedule a test appointment and sit for the exam during the upcoming exam window. Candidates who register for the exam and do not test or transfer will forfeit their full exam fee (see Refunds below).

### **Refunds**

No refunds will be given once the exam fee has been paid. Candidates who register for the exam must either test or transfer (see Transfers to the Next Exam Window above).

## DAY OF EXAM

### Identification Requirements

To be admitted to the examination, you must have two forms of identification bearing your name and your signature. One or more must be a primary form of identification and must include a recent photo.

- Primary forms of identification include: a valid passport, valid driver’s license, or a photo-bearing employee ID card.
- Secondary forms of identification include: military ID card, citizenship card, valid credit card with signature, Social Security Card, or bank automated teller card.
- You may not use a draft classification card or student identification.

Keep both forms of identification with you at all times. If you leave the testing room for any reason, you will be required to show the Test Center Administrator (TCA) your identification to be readmitted to the room. If you do not bring the appropriate identification to the test center, you will not be able to test within that testing window. Please note that your name as it appears on your identification must match the name on the Authorization to Test. Therefore, if any information on your Eligibility ID is incorrect, contact AICP staff at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) or call 312-431-9100 **prior to scheduling your appointment to test.**

### Acceptable Differences in ID

Each candidate must bring two forms of ID on exam day, both containing signatures, one with a photo. If there is a discrepancy in a candidate’s name as it appears on the photo identification and the Eligibility ID email, please at least refer to the examples of acceptable name variations listed below. If the name variation is listed, the candidate may schedule an appointment to test. If the name variation is not listed in the examples of acceptable name variations shown below, the candidate must contact APA via e-mail at [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org) before making an appointment to test. AICP staff will update the candidate’s record and forward the updated record to Prometric. The candidate will be notified once the appropriate changes have been made. The candidate must wait 48 hours before making an appointment in order for the updated file to reach the Prometric test centers.

Allowable Name Discrepancies	Examples
A single-letter discrepancy exists in examinee’s name.	• Single letter difference: Johnson vs. Johmson • Single letter transposition: Alexander vs. Alexandre • Single letter omission: Schultz vs. Shultz • Single letter addition: Miller vs. Mialler or Miler
One version of examinee’s name has a middle initial or middle name while other does not.	• John E. Smith vs. John Smith • Mary R. Abernathy vs. Mary Rose Abernathy
First name is provided formally on one document, but a typical variation is used on another document.	• Michael Jones vs. Mike Jones
Incorrect letters are used in a name on one document but correct letters are used on another document.	• Diller vs. Ditter • Dutton vs. Ditton
Maiden name is used as a middle name on one document, while given middle name is used on another document.	• Mary Elizabeth Smith vs. Mary Jones Smith
Names are shown in Last Name, First Name format.	• Russell, Evan vs. Evan Russell
Suffixes to name should be ignored.	• For example: Jr., Sr., II, III
If the names on examinee’s record on computer and ID differ because examinee has made a legal name change, you must present one of the following: • marriage certificate • divorce decree • legal name change	
<b>Important:</b> Substitution of another name for either the first or last name or both names (e.g., Smith to Jones or Smith to Smith-Jones, or John to James) is not permitted.	

## At the Test Center

Plan to be at the test center for four hours. Arrive early and bring proper ID. You must arrive at the test center 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to complete the required admission process before testing begins. Late arrivals will not be admitted.

After you are admitted, the Test Center Administrator (TCA) will give you a short orientation then escort you to a workstation. You must remain in your seat during the examination, except when authorized to leave by a test center staff member. Candidates may not leave the testing room without the TCA's permission.

You will have access to a calculator on the computer. The TCA will provide you with scratch paper, which may be replaced as needed during testing. You may not remove the scratch paper from the testing room at any time. You will not be allowed to bring your own scratch paper, pencil, or calculator into the testing room.

Raise your hand if you:

- Have a problem with your computer.
- Need more scratch paper.
- Need to take a break (no extra time will be given to take the examination).
- Need the TCA for any reason.

When you have finished with the examination and a post-examination survey, the TCA will collect all your scratch paper.

## Testing Procedures

To ensure that all candidates take the examination under comparable conditions and achieve fair and accurate results, a standardized testing environment will be maintained.

The following regulations and procedures will be observed at every test center:

- You must follow the instructions given by the TCA.
- You will be provided a multi-functioning calculator. It will be a basic, non-programmable, non-printing, four function calculator with percent and square root buttons. You must use this calculator during the examination. No other calculator will be allowed in the testing room.
- Do not bring books or other reference material into the testing room. The TCA will not permit anyone found possessing such materials to continue the examination.
- You will be provided a secured locker to store personal possessions and materials not allowed in the testing room. You may reclaim these items when you leave the test center.
- Visitors are not permitted at the test center.
- You may not bring scratch paper into the testing room. The TCA will give you scratch paper.
- If you wish to leave the room during the examination, you must secure the TCA's permission.
- You will not be permitted to continue the examination beyond the 3 ½ hour time limit. An on-screen clock will count down your time remaining.

## Computer-based Examination Tutorial

A brief tutorial precedes the examination. The tutorial is designed to familiarize you with the computer and the testing software. You will have up to 15 minutes to complete the tutorial. This is in addition to the 3 ½ hours allotted to take the examination. The tutorial will teach you how to select answers, move from one question to the next, and use testing features such as "Item Review," as well as how to use the mouse and keyboard. By familiarizing you with the operation of the computer, the tutorial will make it easier for you to concentrate on completing the examination. You do not need to be concerned with the answers you select during the tutorial; it is intended for practice only and there is no penalty for incorrect answers. Once you exit from the tutorial, you may not return to it. We strongly encourage you to take the tutorial.

As a convenience, APA offers a sample tutorial on our website at [www.planning.org/certification/examprep](http://www.planning.org/certification/examprep). The online sample tutorial is available to candidates at any time.

## Reporting Test Center Irregularities

While at the test center, should you experience a delay in taking your examination or encounter any technical problems, please make sure that this irregularity is documented by the TCA. The TCA will file a written report with Prometric and APA.

## Some Notes on Computer-based Testing

You do not need extensive computer experience to take the examination. On-site assistance includes:

- An online tutorial to guide you through how to use the computer.
- Computer workstations equipped with a mouse, standard keyboards, and 17-inch monitors for optimum viewing.
- Fully trained Test Center Administrators (TCAs) available during your examination for technical assistance. TCAs will not assist with examination content.

Among the benefits of computer-based testing are:

- Ability to mark questions for later review.
- Ability to track and display the time remaining on the examination.

## Examination Logistics

Your scheduled appointment time is four hours. You will have 3 ½ hours to answer 170 examination questions. 150 of the questions will be scored; 20 are questions being considered for future examinations that will not be scored. This is the standard format for computer-based testing. Scored and un-scored questions and content areas are distributed randomly throughout the examination.

You will have 15 minutes prior to the exam for an online tutorial and 15 minutes after the exam to answer a brief computer-administered exit survey at the end of the examination.

During the examination, you will have the opportunity to review all questions. You may change answers or mark or skip questions and then go back to complete your answers. This system allows you to use your time efficiently. Answer the questions you are sure of first, leaving your remaining time for the more difficult questions.

Should your time expire while taking the examination, all answers, regardless of how they are marked, will be calculated into your score. Once your allotted time has expired or you exit the examination, you cannot see or review the questions again.

## Exit Survey

At the conclusion of the examination, you will be asked to complete a brief on-screen survey, which will provide APA and Prometric with an evaluation of your testing experience. All comments will be reviewed after the close of the testing window and will remain confidential.

## Candidate Misconduct

The following are examples of behaviors that are considered to be misconduct and will not be tolerated:

- Giving or receiving assistance of any kind.
- Using any unauthorized references.
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else.
- Failing to follow testing regulations or the instructions of the Test Center Administrator.
- Creating a disturbance of any kind.
- Copying, removing, or attempting to remove examination questions or scratch paper from the testing room.
- Tampering with the operation of the computer or attempting to use it for any function other than taking the examination.
- Leaving the testing room without permission.
- Using electronic communications equipment, such as cellular phones or beepers.
- Bringing in a calculator or PDA.

# SCORING THE EXAMINATION

## Score Validity Review

In the absence of observed misconduct, it should be noted that Prometric and APA routinely conduct post-test administrative review of the validity of the test scores. If irregularities are found as a result of these reviews, the candidate will be contacted and notified of procedures to resolve any validity issues concerning his or her score.

## Score Reports

Your scores are confidential and are released to APA by Prometric. Official score reports will be issued to candidates before leaving the test center. Your Official score report will show a total scaled score and will indicate whether you have passed or failed.

Additional membership information is mailed to members who passed the exam approximately four – six weeks after the window closes. Scores are reported on a scale of 25-75, with 55 as a passing score. To protect candidates' privacy and to maintain the confidentiality of test results, score information for individual candidates will not be given over the telephone. If you have specific questions or concerns about your scores, you may write to APA. Requests for duplicate score reports must be made in writing to [aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org). Electronic score data files will be retained by Prometric for two years. APA retains this information in perpetuity.

## Diagnostic Scores

For diagnostic purposes, failing candidates are informed of how many questions they answered correctly (raw score) in each of the examination content areas. Do not expect diagnostic scores to average out to the total score. Raw score information is intended only to assist the candidate in preparing for reexamination by indicating the areas in which the candidate had the most difficulty. Failing candidates should review those areas in which they scored comparatively low before retaking the examination.

## Equating

The computerized version of the examination pulls the 150 scored questions from a larger pool of questions, meaning that there are different versions of the examination. Equating makes statistical adjustments to test scores to compensate for differences in the relative difficulty of different versions of the examination.

Suppose you and your colleague are equal in your mathematical abilities. You both take a mathematics test. Both tests are intended to cover the same type of mathematics questions; however, the test you take is harder than the one your colleague takes. You answered 35 questions correctly on your test. Your colleague answered 40 questions correctly on his test. It would not be accurate or fair to conclude, on the basis of the test scores, that you were not as proficient in mathematics as your colleague. The difference in the scores was not due to your mathematical abilities, because our first assumption was that you and your colleague were of equal ability. The difference in your scores was due to the fact that one test was harder than the other. Equating allows us to determine that a 35 on the test that you took represents the same level of mathematical knowledge, skills, and abilities as a score of 40 on the test that your colleague took.

## Scaling

Scaling allows scores to be reported on a common scale. Instead of having to remember that a 35 on the test that you took is equivalent to a 40 on the test that your friend took, we can use a common scale and report your score as a scaled score of 55. Since we know that your friend's score of 40 is equal to your score of 35, your friend's score would also be reported as a scaled score of 55.

**Important note:** Scaled scores are not percentage scores. They allow us to report different raw scores that represent the same kind of knowledge, skills, and abilities as the same scaled score.

The scaled scores in the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination range from a low of 25 to a high of 75. A scaled score of 55 or greater indicates a pass. The passing score was set by the AICP examination committee using a standard established statistical procedure.

## Reliability

Reliability is a concept that refers to the accuracy of test scores, such as the scaled scores derived for the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination. All test scores are affected by sources of error to some extent; the smaller the effect, the higher the reliability. Examples of error sources include an unclearly worded test question or even a momentary spell of boredom. Hypothetically, if you could take the same test an infinite number of times, while remaining unchanged (physically and psychologically), your scores would vary. The average of these scores would be your true score, which would be free of error. If a test were perfectly reliable (not affected by error), each time you took the test you would receive the same score and there would be no difference between your test scores and your true score. For a highly reliable test, your test scores would vary, but would all be close to your true score. The concept of reliability is expressed statistically as a reliability coefficient. Reliability coefficients range from 0 (absence of reliability) to 1 (perfect reliability).

## Standard Error of Measurement

Since no measure of test performance is perfectly accurate, you might ask: "How accurate is my AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination scaled score?" This question is not directly answerable since it requires knowing what your score should be (true score). Your true score can never be known. The difference between your actual test score and your true score would be the "error of measurement" associated with this administration of the examination. Since errors of measurement vary from one test administration to another, it would be convenient to estimate how much these errors can be expected to vary. Such an estimate can be calculated without administering the examination to any examinee more than once. This estimate is called the standard error of measurement (SEM). If a test could measure basic elements of the subject matter without error, the value of the SEM associated with that test would be zero, in scaled score units. Although the SEM will invariably exceed zero, its value should be small. APA and Prometric closely monitor the SEM of each test form to ensure reasonable accuracy for the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination.

## If You Have a Complaint

If you have a complaint or wish to make a comment about test center facilities or supervision, examination content, or any other matter related to the testing program, please write to APA at:

American Planning Association  
205 N. Michigan Ave.  
Suite 1200  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Attn: AICP Exam

312-431-9100  
[aicpexam@planning.org](mailto:aicpexam@planning.org)

In all correspondence, be sure to give your name, address and APA ID number. If your questions or comments concern an examination you already have taken, also include the name of the examination, the date you took the examination, the location of your test center, and your examination number. APA will investigate each complaint and respond within a reasonable amount of time.

## If You Retake the Examination

If you decide to take the examination again, you should be aware that, without any change in your level of knowledge, your test score may increase or decrease slightly. This slight change may be caused by something as simple as the way you feel on the day of the test or the temperature of the room in which you take the test. To increase the probability of significantly improving your test score, increase your knowledge of the subject material. You cannot retake just one part of the examination; you must retake the entire examination again and pay the full exam fee.

## AICP Membership & Dues

Passing the exam does not automatically make you a member of AICP. After you have passed the exam, you will receive a prorated invoice for your new AICP dues, bringing them into the same billing cycle as your APA dues. Please do not begin using the AICP designation until your AICP dues are paid and you are a full member of AICP.

# AICP CERTIFICATION EXAM OUTLINE

Changes Starting with the May 2008 Exam

The AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination consists of 170 multiple choice questions (20 of which are pre-test and do not count toward the final score). The items listed below under each of the major areas are intended to be representative and not inclusive of all subject matter known to the planning profession.

Candidates should note that exam questions do not precisely follow the order listed below. Questions are randomly distributed in the examination to provide an even distribution of questions with respect to degrees of difficulty relative to an individual candidate's education and experience.

The specifications are:

## **I. History, Theory and Law [15%]**

- A. History of planning
- B. Planning law
- C. Theory of planning
- D. Patterns of human settlement

## **II. Plan Making and Implementation [30%]**

- A. Visioning and goal setting
- B. Quantitative and qualitative research methods
- C. Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information
- D. Demographics and economics
- E. Natural and built environment
- F. Land use and development regulations
- G. Application of legal principles
- H. Environmental analysis
- I. Growth management techniques
- J. Budgets and financing options
- K. GIS/spatial analysis and information systems
- L. Policy analysis and decision making
- M. Development plan and project review
- N. Program evaluation
- O. Communications techniques
- P. Intergovernmental relationships
- Q. Stakeholder relationships
- R. Project and program management

## **III. Functional Areas of Practice [25%]**

- A. Community development
- B. Comprehensive or long range planning
- C. Development regulation or administration
- D. Economic development and revitalization
- E. Economic analysis and forecasting
- F. Educational, institutional, or military facilities planning
- G. Energy policy
- H. Food system planning
- I. Growth management
- J. Hazard mitigation and disaster planning

- K. Historic preservation
- L. Housing
- M. Infrastructure
- N. Labor force or employment
- O. Land use
- P. Natural resources and the environment
- Q. Parks, open space and recreation
- R. Planning law
- S. Policy planning
- T. Public services
- U. Social and health services
- V. Transportation
- W. Urban design

## **IV. Spatial Areas of Practice [15%]**

- A. Planning at national level
- B. Planning for multi-state or bi-state regions
- C. Planning for state
- D. Planning for sub-state region
- E. Planning at county level
- F. Planning for urban areas
- G. Planning for suburban areas
- H. Planning for small town
- I. Corridors
- J. Neighborhoods
- K. Waterfronts
- L. Historic districts or areas
- M. Downtowns

## **V. Public Participation and Social Justice [10%]**

- A. Public involvement planning
- B. Public participation techniques
- C. Identifying, engaging, and serving underserved groups
- D. Social justice issues, literature, and practice
- E. Working with diverse communities
- F. Coalition building

## **VI. AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct [5%]**



# APPLICANT CRITERION RESPONSE CHECKLIST

The first step in becoming a certified planner is demonstrating that your professional experience meets AICP requirements by submitting the three criteria essays. Every exam application cycle, qualified applicants are denied because they did not carefully review the requirements of each criterion and write responses that meet those requirements.

Before submitting your criterion essays, please use the following checklist to make sure that your responses meet the criterion requirements as defined. If your answer to any of the following questions is NO, please revise your response accordingly before submitting your application.

The AICP exam application requires members to satisfy the criteria requirements in a single set of essays that pulls from experience earned throughout the member's career. More information can be found on page 13 in the Exam Bulletin.

## CRITERION 1

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### ***Involve a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process appropriate to the situation***

1. Does my response describe a planning process that I applied, described in a step-by-step manner in appropriate detail? YES  NO
2. Is my response written in the first person and does it clearly indicate my role and involvement in this process? YES  NO
3. Does my response demonstrate how I showed responsibility and resourcefulness as a planner? YES  NO
4. Does the process I describe involve substantive planning-related principles and tasks that are not purely administrative or pre-professional in nature? YES  NO
5. For 1.3 responses:
  - a. Does my response describe a process I carried out as part of my research, analysis, or teaching experience? YES  NO
  - b. Does my response show the relevance of the project I describe to the field of urban and regional planning? YES  NO
6. Did I carefully proofread my final response to ensure that it is free of grammatical and typographical errors and represents the professional level of expression expected of a certified planner? YES  NO



## CRITERION 2

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### ***Demonstrate a comprehensive point of view when implementing professional planning tasks***

1. Does my response show that I employed a comprehensive point of view as defined by the criterion: considering the consequences of planning decisions as they affect a community's quality of life? YES  NO
2. Does my response describe not just one, but multiple considerations or impacts covering environmental, economic, social, spatial, intergovernmental, and/or stakeholder concerns? YES  NO
3. Does my response use a specific project example to show how I personally applied a comprehensive point of view in my planning practice? YES  NO
4. If I discuss working with multiple governments or stakeholders, do I make clear connections to how I used their input in employing my comprehensive point of view? YES  NO
5. If I describe a comprehensive planning project, do I clearly demonstrate how I employed a comprehensive point of view while working on this project? YES  NO
6. Is my response written in the first person and does it clearly indicate how I myself employed a comprehensive point of view? YES  NO
7. Did I carefully proofread my final response to ensure that it is free of grammatical and typographical errors and represents the professional level of expression expected of a certified planner? YES  NO

## CRITERION 3

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### ***Influence public decision making in the public interest***

1. Does my response use a specific example to show how I or my work influenced the decision making of elected or appointed officials in the public interest? YES  NO
2. Does my response clearly identify the decision makers (elected or appointed officials, or those with decision making authority) in my example? YES  NO
3. Does my response clearly identify the outcome: the decision that I helped influence and promote in the public interest? YES  NO
4. Does my response describe how the decision that I influenced was made in the public interest? YES  NO
5. Is my response written in the first person and does it clearly indicate my involvement in the example I describe? YES  NO
6. Did I carefully proofread my final response to ensure that it is free of grammatical and typographical errors and represents the professional level of expression expected of a certified planner? YES  NO