

# American College of Veterinary Surgeons

## 2021 Phase I Surgical Knowledge Examination

These policies were revised February 2021 and replace pages 20-22 of *the 2021 ACVS Phase I Surgical Knowledge Examination Information Pamphlet*.

### EXAMINATION SECURITY

#### 1) Procedures in the Event of Unethical Behavior

- a) The validity of results awarded candidates for their performance on the American College of Veterinary Surgeons examination is protected by every means available. The American College of Veterinary Surgeons will not report results which it has determined are invalid (i.e., do not represent a reasonable assessment of the candidate's knowledge or competence sampled by the examination). The performance of all candidates is monitored and may be analyzed statistically for purposes of detecting invalid results.
- b) If evidence by observation or statistical analysis suggests that one or more candidates' results may be invalid or that exam security could have been compromised because of unethical behavior by one or more candidates prior to, during, or after the examination, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons will withhold the results pending further investigation. The affected candidate(s) will be so notified.
- c) Examples of unethical behavior affecting the validity of results or that would result in the withholding of results pending further investigation would include, but not be limited to the following: (i) copying of answers from another candidate; (ii) permitting one's answers to be copied; (iii) unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of materials, including examination questions or answers from the current or previous years' examinations, before, during, or after the examination; (iv) contact with unauthorized sources for information during the examination (i.e. notes, electronic devices, or other people) regardless of the intention; and (v) any other evidence indicating the security of the examination could have been breached.
- d) Notification of unethical behavior will be at the earliest possible time following completion of the examination. The candidate(s) will be advised of the procedure for imposing sanctions and informed that results may be withheld as invalid.
- e) On analysis of all available information in such circumstances, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons will make a determination as to the validity of the results in question and will notify the affected candidate(s). If it is determined that the results in question are invalid, they will not be released. Notification of that determination may be made to legitimately interested third parties.
- f) In such circumstances, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons will make every effort to withhold the results of only those candidates directly implicated in the unethical behavior. In some instances, the evidence of unethical behavior is sufficiently strong to cast doubt on the validity of all results, and this evidence may not enable the American College of Veterinary Surgeons to identify the particular candidates involved therein. In such circumstances, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons reserves the right to withhold the results of candidates not directly implicated in the unethical behavior during the investigation.
- g) Candidates or other persons who are directly implicated in an unethical behavior affecting the validity of the examination results or compromising examination security are subject to additional sanctions, including being barred permanently from all future examinations, termination of participation in an ongoing examination, invalidation of results of the examination, withholding or revoking certification,

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being prosecuted for violation of copyright laws, or other appropriate action. Candidates or other persons subject to such additional sanctions will be provided with written notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond to such charges in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *Procedure or Imposition of Sanctions on Candidates Accused of Unethical Behavior* section of this information pamphlet.

- h) Candidates or other persons who engage in other forms of unethical behavior, associated with any aspect of the examination, regardless of any impact on an individual's results, are also subject to the foregoing additional sanctions. Examples of such unethical behavior include, among other things: false statements to or submission of falsified documents to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons; the use of any falsified American College of Veterinary Surgeons' documents or the submission of such documents to other persons; or the offer of any financial or other benefit to any persons, officer, employee, proctor, or other agent or representative of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons in return for any right, privilege, or benefit which is not usually granted by the American College of Veterinary Surgeons to other similarly situated candidates or persons. Candidates or other persons subject to such additional sanctions will be provided with written notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond to such charges in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *Procedure or Imposition of Sanctions on Candidates Accused of Unethical Behavior* section of this information pamphlet.

### 2) **Procedure or Imposition of Sanctions on Candidates Accused of Unethical Behavior**

- a) If the American College of Veterinary Surgeons has reason to believe that a candidate engaged in unethical behavior, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons shall provide written notice to the accused which will include: (i) the suspected unethical activity; (ii) the opportunity to defend against the charges in writing or at a hearing before a Special Committee of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons; and (iii) the sanction or sanctions which the American College of Veterinary Surgeons may impose if the accused fails to defend against the charges or, if after considering the defense, the Special Committee determines that the accused actually engaged in unethical behavior.
- b) Within twenty (20) days after receiving aforementioned notice, the accused shall advise the Chief Executive Officer of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, in writing, whether he or she wishes to defend against the charges and, if so, whether he or she wishes to make such a defense in writing or at a hearing. If the accused fails to respond, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons may impose on the accused any of the sanctions identified in the Examination Contract.
- c) Within twenty (20) days after receipt of the accused's request for an opportunity to defend against the charges, the Chief Executive Officer of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons shall provide the accused with a written summary of the incriminating evidence, including copies of any relevant documentary evidence. If the accused has requested an opportunity to defend against the charges in writing only, the accused shall file his or her written defense with the American College of Veterinary Surgeons within thirty (30) days after issuance of the Chief Executive Officer's written summary of evidence. The Special Committee of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons shall issue its written decision to the Chief Executive Officer and the accused as soon as possible thereafter. If a hearing has been requested, the American College of Veterinary Surgeons shall schedule the hearing at a mutually convenient time and place before a Special Committee within thirty (30) days after issuance of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons' written summary of evidence, and the Special Committee shall issue its written decision as soon as possible thereafter.

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- d) A Special Committee consisting of three (3) Diplomates appointed by the Chair of the Board of Regents of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, who were not involved in the investigation of the allegations against the accused, shall rule on the accused's defense and, if necessary, preside at the hearing. A transcript of the hearing, if any, shall be kept.
- e) The written decision of the Special Committee may be appealed in writing by the accused to the entire Board of Regents of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons within fifteen (15) days of the accused's receipt of such decision. The entire Board of Regents will review all of the evidence considered by the Special Committee, but it will not consider any evidence not previously presented to the Committee. The entire Board of Regents may affirm or reverse the decision of the Special Committee, remand the matter to the Special Committee for further consideration with precise instruction as to the basis of such reconsideration, or modify the sanctions imposed by the Special Committee. No person who served on the Special Committee shall vote or otherwise participate in the Board of Regents' review of the Special Committee's written decision.
- f) The Board of Regents will inform in writing the Director of Certification and the Examination Committee chair of the final decision, including the salient reasoning behind the decision, within thirty (30) days of the final decision (after all appeal deadlines have expired or the appeal process has been completed).
- g) All notices or other correspondence directed to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons or the Special Committee should be sent to the office of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, 19785 Crystal Rock Drive, Suite 305, Germantown, MD 20874-4700.