



ACVS Diplomate Maintenance of Certification Policies and Procedures

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Introduction

Maintenance of Certification is designed to foster continued development and recognition of Diplomate qualifications and protect the public by ensuring all Diplomates meet their professional responsibility to remain uniquely competent in their expertise as veterinary specialists in small and/or large animal surgery.

All ACVS Diplomates certified in 2016 or later are subject to time-limited certification and must undergo mandatory maintenance of certification (MOC) while actively practicing surgery. Diplomates certified in 2015 or earlier may choose to pursue MOC. These Diplomates will then be issued time-limited certificates and must comply with all MOC requirements.

Certification Cycles

Certificates awarded upon initial certification by ACVS are effective until the sixth December 31 after examination (a period of five+ years; e.g., a Diplomate certified in 2016 has an expiration of December 31, 2021). Certificates show the initial date of certification and the date of expiration.

Certificates awarded upon successful maintenance of certification are effective for a period of five years. Diplomates will be issued revised certificates for each subsequent cycle showing the initial date of certification and current expiration date.

Maintenance of Certification Requirements

To maintain ACVS certification, Diplomates with time-limited certificates must adhere to the following requirements:

1. **Achieve a total of 100 activity points** of which a minimum of 70 points must be in the Diplomate's respective specialty of certification (large animal surgery or small animal surgery). [Activities](#) must be on the MOC Approved Activities List or have received individual approval from the Maintenance of Certification Committee (MCC).
2. Record all maintenance of certification activities in the ACVS CERT system at cert.acvs.org. Completed MOC records must be submitted no later than 11:59pm EST, **November 1 in the year that the Diplomate's current certificate expires.**
3. Maintain good standing with ACVS as defined in the [ACVS Constitution and Bylaws](#).

Points from activities completed after the November 1 submission deadline will be counted toward the Diplomate's next MOC record submission.

Failure to achieve or meet these requirements will result in [loss of certification](#). Policies for reinstatement are detailed later in this document.

Dual certified Diplomates are subject to maintenance of certification policies and procedures for each time-limited certificate obtained in 2016 or later. See [maintenance of certification activities](#) for information about recording activities on two MOC records.

Dual certified Diplomates may opt to relinquish their initial species certificate and maintain only the second certificate. Diplomates must notify ACVS in writing of which species certificate they have chosen not to maintain prior to the November 1 deadline for MOC record submission. Diplomates who wish to reactivate their initial species certificate must follow reinstatement procedures for [individuals with expired certificates](#).

Maintenance of Certification Activities

All activities undertaken for the purpose of maintaining certification should result in the acquisition of new knowledge by the Diplomate. The majority of activities submitted by Diplomates as proof of maintenance should be within their certified surgery specialty. However, ACVS recognizes that there is value in some cross-species education. Therefore, a minimum of 70 activity points must be earned within the Diplomate's respective specialty of certification (small animal surgery or large animal surgery) during the certification cycle. Activities completed in other species or non-patient care topics will count toward the 100 activity points needed but will not count toward the 70 points required within the surgery specialty. Diplomates maintaining two time-limited certificates may count the same activity toward both certificates, as long as the activity falls within the respective certification cycle dates of the certificates.

The types of activities that qualify for ACVS maintenance of certification points are included in the MOC Approved Activities List. The list is maintained by the MCC and available on the ACVS website at www.acvs.org/moc/activities-list and will be updated annually in January as new activities are approved by the MCC. Activities are grouped into several categories, including continuing education (CE) events (meetings, workshops, laboratories, webinars, etc.), presentations, publications, reviewer service, certification and postgraduate training, ACVS resident advisor service, and select ACVS committee service. Activities that are not included in the MOC Approved Activities List are not guaranteed to be accepted by ACVS for maintaining certification. A Diplomate interested in receiving credit for an additional activity should follow procedures to [submit a request for evaluation](#).

Process for Documenting Maintenance of Certification

Diplomates must use the CERT system (cert.acvs.org) to record proof of maintenance of certification activities completed during their certification period. The required proof varies by activity and is indicated on the [MOC Approved Activities List](#).

Diplomates may submit completed MOC records to ACVS starting June 1 of the final year of their current certification cycle.

The deadline for Diplomates to submit completed MOC records is November 1 of the final year of their current certification cycle. Failure to submit proof by this date results in loss of certification at the time of certificate expiration. **There is no grace period for certificate expiration.**

Activities completed by a Diplomates after the November 1 submission deadline will be counted toward the Diplomate's next MOC record submission.

Audit of Maintenance of Certification Activities

Approximately 10% of the submissions each year are selected for audit by the Maintenance of Certification Committee (MCC). All applications for reinstatement of ACVS certification are evaluated by the MCC.

Individual Diplomates may be contacted to provide additional documentation or answer questions based on the MCC evaluation process. The timeline for audit and Diplomate response to concerns will be posted on the MOC website.

All Diplomates will be notified by December 20 of their certification status. Diplomates whose submissions have been approved by the ACVS Board of Regents are issued certificates for an additional five-year period. Diplomates who fall short of the required number of approved activity points are notified of the ACVS Board of Regents' action, the outcome of the committee audit, and that their certificates will expire as of December 31.

Appeals Process

Formerly board-certified individuals may submit an appeal to the ACVS Board of Regents by submitting a written petition as outlined in the *Protocol for Processing of Appeals* for reconsideration only on the grounds that the determination: (a) disregarded the established criteria; (b) failed to follow the stated procedures; or (c) failed to consider relevant information and documentation presented. Appeals must

be submitted within 30 days of notification by ACVS of an adverse decision. Contact the ACVS office to obtain the protocol.

Loss of Certification

Loss of certification occurs when a Diplomate fails to maintain good standing with ACVS, fails to submit proof of maintenance by the deadline, or fails to satisfy the required number of MOC activity points.

Diplomates will be notified by ACVS following the loss of good standing with ACVS, the MOC record submission deadline, or by December 20, depending on the reason for loss of certification.

Diplomates who have lost certification are subject to the following:

- They can no longer refer to themselves as an ACVS Diplomate or as an ACVS board-certified veterinary surgeon.
- They will not receive the journal *Veterinary Surgery*.
- They cannot register at the reduced Surgery Summit rate.
- They cannot supervise surgery residents in any capacity.
- They will be removed from directories and lists of active Diplomates that ACVS provides.

Formerly board certified individuals who wish to reinstate certification must follow the applicable procedures either for [reinstatement within the certification cycle](#) or [reinstatement of individuals with expired certificates](#).

Reinstatement of Individuals Within the Certification Cycle

Formerly board-certified individuals who failed to maintain good standing with ACVS during their certification cycle and desire reinstatement must notify ACVS of their intent prior to the November 1 deadline to submit their existing MOC record and pay a reinstatement fee.

Once the reinstatement fee for the current year is received, individuals will be returned to active Diplomate status with access to their existing MOC record. The following apply:

- The Diplomate must complete and submit their existing MOC record by November 1 prior to their certificate expiration date to maintain certification.
- No additional time to complete maintenance activities will be added to the existing certification cycle.
- Failure to meet this deadline results in loss of certification and requires the individual to follow procedures for formerly board-certified individuals with expired certificates as described below.

Reinstatement of Individuals with Expired Certificates

Formerly board-certified individuals with expired certificates who desire reinstatement must notify ACVS of their intent and pay a reinstatement fee. The reinstatement fee must be received before individuals will be allowed access to the ACVS CERT system for MOC records or Phase II Surgical Competency Examination registration. After the reinstatement fee is received, individuals must complete one of two paths:

1. **Accumulate missing and additional points during the one-year period immediately following certification expiration** to reinstate certification without reexamination.
 - **Diplomates must make up missing points from the previous certification cycle and accumulate 20 additional points for the current year.** All missing points and additional points must be earned from new activities after the last date that proof of maintenance was required (e.g., November 1). “Backdating” or submission of activities from the prior cycle is not permitted.
 - All required reinstatement points must be completed and submitted by November 1 immediately following certificate expiration. Failure to meet this one-year deadline requires a formerly board-certified individual to take the Phase II Surgical Competency Examination.
 - Missing and additional points are reviewed by the MCC. If approved, certification is reinstated effective as of the next certification date (i.e., January 1), which is listed on the certificate as the date of initial certification.

2. **Successfully pass the Phase II Surgical Competency Examination.**
 - Individuals who pass the Phase II examination are issued a new certificate. The certificate will be effective until the sixth December 31 after examination.
 - Individuals must follow the policies in the ACVS Phase II Surgical Competency Examination Information Pamphlet. See the [Phase II Examination webpage](#) for details.

Formerly board-certified individuals who have successfully met the requirements for reinstatement, as described in the two paths above, must pay a reinstatement fee to complete the reinstatement process and return to active Diplomate status. Back dues are not collected.

Hardship Extension Request

The time frame for maintenance of certification can be extended for circumstances of extreme hardship such as serious personal illness or military deployment. Hardship extension requests must be submitted in writing and be accompanied by documentation of the nature of the hardship and the duration. Requests for extensions should be submitted to certification@acvs.org to the attention of the Chair of the MCC for committee consideration and recommendation of action by the ACVS Board of Regents. Requests must be received not later than 14 days prior to November 1, of the expiration year.

Request for Evaluation of an Additional Activity by a Diplomate

Diplomates may request consideration for additional activities to count toward their individual maintenance of certification points. Approved additional activities are for a one-time use by the requesting Diplomate. **All such requests may be submitted to the MCC via the CERT system any time prior to the activity or not later than 90 days after the activity concludes. Requests submitted more than 90 days after the activity will not be considered for individual activity points.** To submit a request, in the CERT system, select the Additional Activity icon on the Log New Activity page. Enter the required information in the form. Diplomates are encouraged to upload documents to support the request such as:

- a published program or description of the activity that defines the expected learning objectives,
- a published agenda or schedule documenting the educational hours,
- a published list of presenting speakers with their specialist credentials.

After the MCC has approved the request, Diplomates must add the required proof of completion document to the activity to finish logging the activity in their MOC record.

Additions to the MOC Approved Activities List

Individual Diplomates or organizations may request that new items be added to the MOC Approved Activities List for use by all Diplomates maintaining certification. Requests should be submitted to the attention of the Chair of the MCC at certification@acvs.org. All requests must include a written description of the proposed activity to be included on the MOC Approved Activities List, justification for including the activity on the MOC Approved Activities List, and a representative conference/meeting program (if CE based) or other appropriate literature about the activity. The MCC considers the request and makes an annual recommendation to the ACVS Board of Regents for final determination of additions to the list and point values for activities. The MOC Approved Activities List is updated annually in January with any approved changes. All requests received by September 1 will be considered.

Use of ACVS Systems and Data

In the course of ACVS's operations, employees are granted access to systems and records of ACVS for purposes of performing their individual job duties. ACVS maintains within its systems information that is considered confidential and that is not to be shared with third parties or otherwise utilized for purposes other than the conduct of ACVS's operations. ACVS systems, as well as data contained in those systems (including but not limited to records and data of Diplomates, other members of the veterinary profession, and ACVS staff) are to be accessed by staff only for purposes of conducting ACVS business. Any individuals accessing ACVS systems or data for purposes unrelated to the performance of their duties, or otherwise disclosing confidential data, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Questions

Address all questions regarding MOC requirements to Sarah Donnelly, staff liaison to the Maintenance of Certification Committee, at 301-916-0200 x120 or certification@acvs.org.

Appendix: Summary of Changes

ACVS Diplomate Maintenance of Certification Policies and Procedures were initially published January 6, 2017. Changes to these policies and procedures are effective for all Diplomates subject to maintenance of certification unless otherwise specified.

Changes published in 2018:

- Included policies for dual certified Diplomates subject to maintenance of certification:
 - Maintaining two time-limited certificates
 - Maintaining only one certificate
- Added guidance for dual certified Diplomates recording activities on two MOC records.
- Clarified effects of a loss of certification (former section name: Expired Certificates).
- Added procedures for reinstatement of individuals within the certification cycle.
- Updated reinstatement procedures to include reinstatement fee language.
- Revised deadline for submission of a request for evaluation of an additional activity by a Diplomate.

Changes published in 2021:

- Clarified the submission period during which completed MOC records are accepted by ACVS.
- Updated categories of maintenance activities to match the sections of the MOC record.
- Added guidance regarding Phase II examination registration to reinstatement procedures.

Changes published in 2023:

- Clarified that 70 activity points must be earned in the Diplomate's specialty of certification. (i.e., small animal surgery or large animal surgery). Activities completed in other species or non-patient care topics count towards the 100 total points but not the points required in the surgical specialty.
- Clarified that points from activities completed after the November 1 submission deadline may be counted toward the Diplomate's next MOC record submission.
- Updated the Hardship Extension Request description to include the deadline that such requests must be received by ACVS.
- Updated the process for submitting a Request for Evaluation of an Additional Activity to match the new process in CERT, the ACVS certification tracking system.

Changes published in 2024:

- Added Use of ACVS Systems and Data policy