



TESTING COMMITTEE

Standard Operating Procedures

DIRECTIVE: Establishes guidelines for testing applicants for certification and re-certification and manages the administration of examinations. This Committee approves written examination questions and practical case assignments, for certification and recertification purposes.

1. Committee Members

- 1.1. The Chairman of this Committee is appointed by the President.
- 1.2. At least two (2) Directors are assigned to this Committee by the President. These Directors may evaluate the Practical Case Assignments.
- 1.3. If for some reason the original Directors assigned to this Committee are unavailable to fulfill their duties, other suitable Directors or Diplomates may be assigned, as determined by the President or Testing Committee Chair. Hereinafter, all original Directors from the Testing Committee and/or any alternate Directors or Diplomates will be referred to as *Practical Case Assignment Evaluators*. These alternate evaluators will be forwarded the ***ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Practical Case Assignment Evaluators*** document, to be read, signed, and returned to the Testing Chair.

2. Test Candidates

- 2.1. The Testing Committee Chair will contact the candidate (either by telephone or in writing) no later than ten (10) working days of notification by the Credentials Committee Chair, outline the testing procedure and discuss how to begin the testing process.
- 2.2. All candidates will be assigned an anonymous number by the Testing Chair.
 - 2.2.1. The candidate's anonymous number will be used for correspondence regarding the three phases of testing.

- 2.3. All candidates are required to sign a confidentiality agreement which requires that the candidate not disclose the contents of any of the ABFDE tests and problems.

3. Termination from Testing Due to Unsatisfactory Progress

- 3.1. All candidates will be advised that they have two and one-half (2½) years after approval of their application to complete the examination process.
- 3.2. The Testing Committee Chair shall closely monitor satisfactory progress towards certification.
 - 3.2.1. Time periods longer than two and one-half (2½) years shall be closely scrutinized with termination of the certification process as an option.
 - 3.2.2. Upon recommendation of the Testing Committee Chair to the Board of Directors, a 2/3-majority vote of the Board of Directors is required to terminate a candidate for unsatisfactory progress.
 - 3.2.3. The candidate will be advised of the initiation of this procedure and provided an opportunity to provide input to the Board of Directors prior to their vote.
 - 3.2.3.1. A member of the Board of Directors may recuse him/herself from voting at this or any phase of the testing procedures, and the vote computation will then be based upon the remaining members of the Board of Directors.

4. Test Materials

- 4.1. All tests will be maintained by the Testing Chair in a secure manner which allows no unauthorized access to the testing materials by anyone other than a Director.
- 4.2. Tests approved for use after January 1, 2004 for written and practical case will have been validated by the Test Preparation Committee prior to being added to the Testing Committee's test pool.
- 4.3. Pass/Fail rates will be maintained for written tests. Evaluations for practical case assignments will be maintained by the Testing Chair and made available to the oral panel.
- 4.4. All Practical Case Assignment materials will be mailed to or from the Testing Chair under signed receipt using a mailing or delivery vendor. This is for tracking purposes.
- 4.5. If a candidate fails the testing phase of testing, the candidate may agree to spend six months with a mentor to address the identified areas of deficiency. This mentor will be selected by the ABFDE BOD and will agree to devote a minimum of 80 hours of time in assistance to the candidate. At the end of the 6 months, if the mentor certifies in

writing that the candidate has made significant progress in the specified areas, the candidate will be issued a new written exam

- 4.6. In the event that a candidate is unsuccessful at any one of the 5 practical case assignments, he or she will be provided the opportunity to rework a different practical assignment of the same or similar type, respective to the testing area involved with the prior failure. This option is available only once during a candidate's testing process.
- 4.7. If the candidate is unsuccessful at more than one practical case assignment, the candidate will be required to wait a minimum of two years before being allowed to test again. After a waiting period of two (2) years the candidate will have to re-apply and begin the process at the Credentials Phase (beginning). There is no limit to the number of times that a candidate may re-enter the testing process after a two-year waiting period. The candidate will continue the testing program with the same anonymous candidate number that was originally assigned.

5. Written Examination

- 5.1. The written examination will be administered by a member of the Testing Committee or by a member of the Board of Directors at a meeting or event of a recognized organization or by an assignee of the Testing Committee Chair. The Diplomate in charge of administering the written test will complete a Proctor's Declaration form and the *ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Written Test Evaluators* document and forward it to the Testing Chair with all written tests administered.
- 5.2. The Director who proctors the written test will grade the test and forward the test to Testing Committee Chair.
- 5.3. The Chair will grade the written examination confirming the initial score and inform the candidate of the test results no later than twenty (20) working days after receipt.
 - 5.3.1. For those candidates who are unsuccessful, the Testing Committee's recommendation may be appealed to the entire Board. The candidate's appeal procedures are outlined in the Rules and Procedures Guide.
 - 5.3.2. Candidates who pass continue forward in the process to the Practical Case Assignment phase.

6. Practical Case Assignment

- 6.1. Upon successful completion of the written test, the Testing Committee Chair will advise the candidate that the next phase of the testing process consists of the candidate examining a set of five (5) Practical Case Assignments.
 - 6.1.1. The candidate is allowed forty-five (45) days (not to include mailing time) in which to complete the Practical Case Assignments. Extensions may be granted

on a per-case basis. Extensions should be liberally considered, as these procedures have been enacted for the primary benefit of the candidate.

- 6.1.2. The candidate will be sent an instructional letter with the five (5) Practical Case Assignments which outline his/her obligations regarding the tests and in particular stresses the need for the candidate not to disclose or discuss the test.
- 6.2. The Testing Chair maintains a cloud-based record of all documents and work product connected with each candidate. Once the candidate has submitted the work product from the PCA's, the Testing Chair will provide access to each *Practical Test Evaluator* no later than fifteen (15) working days of receipt from the candidate. Each *Practical Test Evaluator* will have access to the identity of the Test Candidate by an assigned (anonymous) number, a copy of the ***ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Practical Test Evaluators*** (to be read, signed and returned to the Testing Chair), confidentiality agreements to be signed and returned, a summary of the minimum criteria for each PCA assigned to the Candidate, and one set of the candidate's work product. The Candidate will be responsible for sending a signed hard copy of the work product and return the testing materials via a trackable delivery service.
- 6.3. Each *Practical Case Assignment Evaluator* will review the candidate's notes and findings. Each Committee member submits his/her recommendation as to whether they progress to the Chair no later than twenty (45) working days after receipt.
 - 6.3.1. Each *Practical Case Assignment Evaluator* conducts his/her evaluation independently without knowledge of each other's evaluation result.
 - 6.3.2. The *Practical Test Evaluators'* evaluation sheets will include a review of the findings and the methodology to determine whether they are logical and in accordance with accepted forensic document examination practices. *Practical Test Evaluators* will review the conclusions and notes to determine whether they meet the *Required* and *Important* criteria specified for each practical case assignment. The outcome for each Practical Case Assignment will be determined as follows:
 - a. Successful: If all *Required* criteria and all *Important* criteria are satisfied in the practical case assignment notes, the candidate passes that practical case assignment.
 - b. Unsuccessful: If all *Required* criteria are not satisfied in the practical case assignment notes, then the candidate is not promoted to the oral panel phase.
 - c. Rework: If all *Required* criteria are satisfied but *Important* criteria are not satisfied in the practical case assignment, then the candidate receives a new, comparable replacement test as a "rework" of that practical case assignment.
- 6.4. Upon return of all Practical Case Assignments, notes and results, the Testing Committee Chair will submit copies of the results to each Practical Test Evaluator.

Digital copies will be uploaded to the cloud-based Testing Committee file folder and shared with each Evaluator.

- 6.5. The Testing Committee Chair shall notify the candidate in writing concerning the Committee's results no later than fifteen (15) working days following receipt of all Practical Test Evaluators' recommendations. A 2/3-majority vote is required to proceed to the oral examinations.
- 6.6. For those candidates who are unsuccessful, the Testing Committee's recommendation may be appealed to the entire Board. The same appeal procedures outlined in the RPG shall be followed.

7. Oral Examination

- 7.1. Successful candidates will be contacted and provided the option of having the oral examination take place at a meeting or event of a recognized organization at which three Directors or Diplomate Assignees are expected to attend. Under special circumstances other arrangements may be made, but this option is not recommended.
- 7.2. The panel for the oral examination shall be composed of at least one Director and two Diplomates appointed by the Testing Committee Chair.
- 7.3. The Testing Committee Chair shall inform the candidate at least fourteen (14) days in advance of the oral examination as to the necessary preparations. The information shall also establish the date and location of the examination and the name of the Director responsible for coordinating it. This notice may be telephonic, written or by e-mail.
- 7.4. The candidate will be informed that three of the five Practical Case Assignments are to be defended at the Oral Boards. The Testing Chair will send a list of the three tests to the candidate. *(As much lead-time as possible should be provided the candidate).*
- 7.5. The Testing Chair shall plan to attend, organize and run the Oral Boards. If, however, the Testing Chair is unable to do this, s/he will assign that responsibility to another Director who is scheduled to be in attendance. The Testing Chair will insure that the appointed Director will be sufficiently trained by sending the designate the ***ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Oral Boards Evaluators*** document (to be read, signed and returned to the Testing Chair). All the Directors participating on the Oral Board will complete a Proctor's Declaration form.
- 7.6. All panel members should be familiar with the Practical Case Assignments being reviewed. Whenever possible, the actual tests should be available during the examination. All tests are to be available on the cloud-based system and access provided to the members of the oral panel.
- 7.7. All panel members should be familiar with the candidate's results/case notes. Whenever possible, each member should be provided a copy of these results/case notes for review

prior to the examination. (All copies disseminated to panel members must be returned to the Director coordinating the Oral Board at its conclusion.)

- 7.8. The examination should be conducted in a conference room or other suitable setting. Reasonable audio-visual requests of the candidate should be provided.
- 7.9. To maintain the highest degree of professionalism, all panel members should be properly attired and conduct themselves accordingly.
 - 7.9.1. All members should offer their undivided attention during the examination, and all distractions should be kept to a minimum.
 - 7.9.2. If an interruption is unavoidable, the examination should be adjourned for a brief recess.
- 7.10. The oral examination is planned for about 90 minutes. Additional time should be taken for questions and discussion after each presentation, and critique at the end of session. All members will be provided with an evaluation form to be completed for each examination.
- 7.11. The purpose of the oral examination is to assess the candidate's reasoning, methodology, and underlying knowledge of the field of forensic document examination. As such, all candidates should be afforded the opportunity to properly present their findings; and all questions posed should be probative and constructive.
- 7.12. At the conclusion of the oral examination, the candidate is excused from the room while the panel deliberates and reaches a consensus. Strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's performance should be discussed.
- 7.13. The candidate is then called back into the room, and a constructive critique of his/her performance is conducted.
 - 7.13.1. The panel is then permitted to convey to the candidate what will be their recommendation to the Testing Committee.
 - 7.13.2. It should be emphasized that it is a recommendation, and before a candidate is certified, a full vote of the Board is required.
- 7.14. At the conclusion of the oral examination, all copies of testing materials, answers, and demonstrative aids should be collected from the candidate. This is to ensure the privacy of the candidate and the integrity of the tests.

8. Board of Directors Vote

- 8.1. The panel will make their recommendation to the Testing Committee Chair no later than five (5) work days of convening.

- 8.2. The Testing Committee Chair shall notify the Board Secretary of the Committee's recommendation.
- 8.3. The Secretary will then transmit ballots to the Board of Directors.
- 8.4. All ballots are to be returned to the Secretary no later than ten (10) working days after receipt.
- 8.5. The Secretary will send a letter to the candidate concerning the results of the Board vote not later than ten (10) working days following receipt of the last ballot.
 - 8.5.1. Copies of this letter will be sent to the President, Testing Committee Chair, and administrative office.
- 8.6. Following a 2/3 majority vote by the Board to pass the candidate, the Secretary will make arrangements for the issuance of the ABFDE Certificate in a timely manner.
- 8.7. The Testing Committee Chair will forward all test results and allied material of a candidate to the Administrative Office upon a candidate's completion of testing.
- 8.8. After the candidate's testing process is completed, all Testing Committee members are duty bound to destroy all copies of answers to Practical Case Assignments submitted to them.

9. Failure to Complete All Phases of Testing Process

A candidate who is unsuccessful may reapply for certification in accordance with the applicable section of the Rules and Procedures Guide of the organization.

- 9.1. If a candidate requests to be readmitted to the testing process, s/he must wait a minimum of two (2) years. After this wait, the candidate may re-apply, pay the then-current application fee, and will start the testing process at the Credentials Phase (beginning).
- 9.2. In the event a testing candidate fails, withdraws, or is dismissed from the testing program, the Chair will forward a disposition letter of failure, withdrawal, or dismissal to the Administrative Office and forward a copy to the Secretary and to the President.
- 9.3. The Testing Chair will transmit the digital testing files of all unsuccessful candidates to the Administrative Office who will retain them for three (5) years.. Upon completion of a two (2) year period, the Testing Chair will destroy an unsuccessful candidate's paper file. (It is assumed that all pertinent correspondence will already be included in the unsuccessful Candidate's permanent file in the Administrative Office.)
 - 9.3.1. The Testing Chair notifies the Credentials Chair to close his/her candidate file as the candidate is completely out of the testing process.

10. Annual Summary Report

8.1. The Chair of the Testing Committee will compile and present two reports at the Annual Board Meeting:

8.1.1. *Candidate Activity Report* will include the following information:

- 8.1.1.1. Status of new candidates
- 8.1.1.2. Progress of current candidates
- 8.1.1.3. Candidates that progressed to Diplomate status
- 8.1.1.4. Candidates who withdrew
- 8.1.1.5. Candidates that failed and at what phase

8.1.2. *Written, Practical and Oral Testing Activity Report* will include data gathered from answers and/or comments collected during testing the previous year. The report will include information from the following areas:

- 8.1.2.1. Written Testing Phase
- 8.1.2.2. Practical Case Assignment Phase
- 8.1.2.3. Oral Board Examinations

9. Annual Audit

11.1. Testing Committee Chair will perform an annual audit of documents and records to ensure both completeness and security. This audit may include:

- 11.2.1. Organizing and filing necessary documentation such as Annual Reports, Candidate, Activity Reports and Written, Practical and Oral Testing Activity Reports
- 11.2.2. Destroying extraneous documents and digital files
- 11.2.3. Maintaining relevant correspondence