

AICP Exam

Application Tips + Preparation



www.ohioplanning.org/aicpexam

Outline

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Introductions

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Why AICP?

- Distinction among your peers and the public
 - Advocate and advance the field of planning
 - Be recognized for achieving professional level of skills
- Enhanced opportunities for employees and consultants
 - "AICP preferred" in job postings
 - Required within a certain time frame by employers
 - Distinguish yourself from the competition
- Enhanced salaries
 - AICP members earn median salaries \$15,700 more than non AICP members. (2014)

www.planning.org/aicp/why

Exam Overview

- Exam is offered twice a year: May & November
- Each exam window lasts 14 days
- Tests are administered electronically at Prometric testing centers
- You may take the test only once during each exam window
- You must register each time you wish to test
- Eligibility lasts for two years (four exam windows) upon application approval
- Approved applications expire after two years (four exam windows)

Applying to Take the Exam

- Application is online only at www.planning.org/aicp
- Upcoming Dates:
 - **November 2015 Testing Window**
 - Final Notification Deadline: September 25
 - Registration Deadline: October 22
 - Transfer Deadline: October 22
 - Testing Window: November 2-17
 - **May 2016 Testing Window**
 - Application Window Opens: December 1
 - Early Bird Deadline: December 7
 - Final Application Deadline: December 31
 - Testing Window: May 9-22, 2016

Applying to Take the Exam

Professional Planning Experience

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 not 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.

Applying to Take the Exam

Does My Experience Qualify?

Part-Time

- Part-time experience is accepted
- Part-time experience is prorated into a full-time equivalent (assuming a 40 hr. work week)
- Should be used by full time workers who devote a portion of their time to another field

Internship

- Intern experience is accepted **so long as:**
 - the internship was not part of course work for a grade (this must be stated in the verification letter)
 - the experience meets the definition of professional planning experience

Non-Traditional

- Non-traditional experience, like unpaid work or volunteer work, is accepted **so long as:**
 - the experience meets the definition of professional planning experience
 - experience must be at a professional level

Applying to Take the Exam

Does My Experience Qualify?

Experience in Related Fields or Professions

- Experience in Related Fields or Professions is accepted **so long as:**
 - the experience meets the definition of professional planning experience
- Persons working full-time, but devoting a portion of their time to another field, may prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent (assuming a 40 hr. work week).
- Contributions by members of city councils, boards of commissioners, planning commissioners, boards of zoning appeals, and citizen advisory boards does not constitute professional planning experience.

Applying to Take the Exam

What Jobs Should I Include?

- Only include positions needed to meet the minimum eligibility requirements (2, 3, 4 or 8 years)
- Include positions for which you can provide the strongest responses (and meet eligibility requirements)
- When possible, do not include jobs that were held for a short amount of time (i.e. less than 6 months)

Applying to Take the Exam

General Application Tips

- **Read** the Exam Candidate Bulletin & use the Criterion Response Checklist
- **APPLY EARLY!**
- Proofread your responses
- Ask an AICP co-worker or supervisor to review your responses before submitting
- Write your essays in a Word document before submitting responses
- Keep copies of your essays and verification documents

Applying to Take the Exam

General Application Tips

NEW -- Only one set of essays required

Applicants must address the criteria requirements in a single set of narrative essays that pulls from experience earned throughout their career; it is no longer necessary to write different sets of essays for each position included in your application.

Applying to Take the Exam

Employment Verification Tips

- Give your employer(s) **ample** time to complete a verification letter on your behalf
- Provide your employer (current and former) with the sample verification letter:
<http://www.planning.org/certification/pdf/samplejobverification.pdf>
- Double check to ensure all required information is included in each verification letter before submitting

Applying to Take the Exam

Employment Verification Tips

- Should you have a unique circumstance (i.e. former employer has gone out of business, etc.), please review the Exam Candidate Bulletin or email aicpexam@planning.org to determine how you should proceed.

Applying to Take the Exam

Educational Experience Verification Tips

Acceptable ways to verify your educational experience include:

- Providing a *notarized* diploma(s)
- Providing a PDF of official transcript(s) from your university
- Providing a letter from a school dean, registrar, or program director on University letterhead confirming that the degree was conferred
 - **Don't wait until the last minute to gather this information!**

Applying to Take the Exam

Common Reasons Applications are Marked Incomplete

- Improper verification of educational experience
- Not meeting minimum eligibility requirements
- Not including the required information in an employment verification letter
- Not uploading the required verification documentation

Applying to Take the Exam

Criterion Responses: General Tips

- Review the Do's and Don'ts Section of the Exam Candidate Bulletin
- Craft responses that are between 250 and 500 words
- Speak in first person (i.e. use the word "I" throughout the response) – don't speak to what "the team" did
- Refrain from using bulleted lists and writing in incomplete sentences
- **REMEMBER** – Reviewers are required to base their decision on your criterion responses. Do not assume your application will be approved just because you have a lot of planning experience.

Applying to Take the Exam

Criterion Responses: General Tips

- Only include completed project examples in your responses. Assumptions about project outcomes cannot be used to verify experience already gained.
- Consider information provided in your verification materials as supplemental. You must include and expand on these responsibilities in your responses.

Applying to Take the Exam

Criterion Responses: Specific Tips

Criterion 1: Involve a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness while Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation.

- Discuss how you applied a planning process appropriate to the situation through one of the three sections of professional planning content
- AND how you were a responsible and resourceful professional when applying that process.

Applying to Take the Exam

Criterion Responses: Specific Tips

Criterion 2: Employ An Appropriately Comprehensive Point of View.

- Describe your role(s) in a project(s) and how you were able to employ a comprehensive point of view, rather than simply describing project outcomes.
- Describe how you employed a comprehensive point of view, not how the project/process itself or outcomes were comprehensive.

Applying to Take the Exam

Criterion Responses: Specific Tips

Criterion 3: Influence Public Decision Making in the Public Interest.

- There are two parts to this criterion:
 - 1) *Discuss how you have been responsible to the public.*
 - 2) *Discuss how you have influenced public decision making in the public interest.*
 - You must answer both parts successfully to qualify.

Applying to Take the Exam

Tips for Returning Applicants

Returning Applicants: Pre-Approved

- An application is pre-approved for six consecutive exam windows, beginning with the window in which you were initially approved.
- You must register your intent to sit for the exam within that open application window.
- If your application is expired (i.e. falls outside of the six consecutive exam window), you will need to submit a new application for full review.

Applying to Take the Exam

Tips for Returning Applicants

Returning Applicants: Previously Denied
 Check to see which (if any) verification materials are still on file and revise materials where needed

- Follow the guidance provided in your denial statement
- Ensure you have addressed the reasons for denial cited in your denial letter before resubmitting
- Upload valid verifications

Applying to Take the Exam

AICP Certification Related Costs

- Before Exam
 - AICP Comprehensive Planning Exam Application Fee - \$70 (non-refundable if denied)
 - AICP Comprehensive Planning Exam Fee - \$425 (scholarships are available through APA Ohio)
- Post Exam
 - AICP Dues – This fee is in addition to APA membership. You will receive an invoice for pro-rated AICP dues if you pass the exam. Sliding scale based on salary.
 - Certification Maintenance – free and for-cost educational activities are available

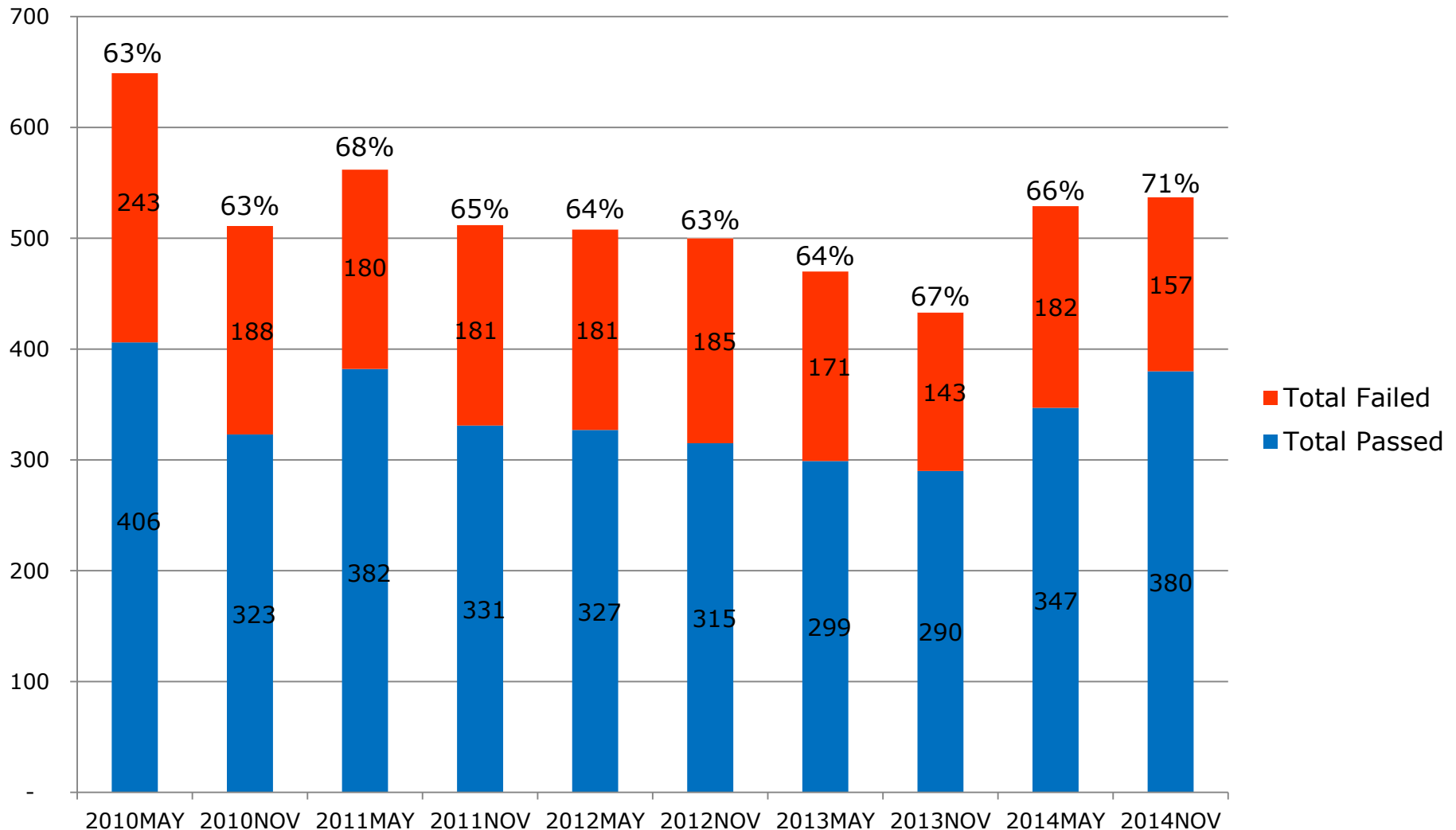
Applying to Take the Exam

Exam Score Details

- Official score provided immediately after completing the computerized exam (thank you!)
- Scores are reported on a scale of 25-75, with 55 as the passing score
- Official letter sent out about one month later along with pro-rated dues invoice
- Official welcome package sent out about three months after exam window closes

Applying to Take the Exam

Pass Rate Data



Applying to Take the Exam

Personal Experience + Questions?

The AICP Exam - What to Expect

Overview

- 600 questions in the pool
- 170 questions on the test
 - Only 150 are scored – 20 are “feelers”
- 3 versions of each test at all times
- You are given 4 hours to complete the exam:
 - 15 minutes at the start to read directions
 - 3 ½ hours to take the exam
 - 15 minutes at the end to complete a survey
 - You must complete the survey before seeing your score on the screen. 😊

The AICP Exam - What to Expect

Exam Content

- **Plan Making & Implementation** - 45 Questions (30%)
- **Functional Areas of Practice** - 38 Questions (25%)
- **History, Theory, and Law** - 23 Questions (15%)
- **Spatial Areas of Practice** - 22 Questions (15%)
- **Public Participation + Social Justice** - 15 Questions (10%)
- **AICP Code of Ethics** - 7 Questions (5%)

The AICP Exam - What to Expect

Ahead of the Exam

- Confirm your appointment (over the phone) with your testing center at least one week ahead of time
- If you don't know where your testing site is, do a drive by ahead of time
 - Know if there's construction or daily traffic that may affect your drive time
- Bring two forms of ID (see Exam Bulletin for list)
 - If you have concerns, call the testing center ahead of time
- If you plan to use ear plugs, call the testing center ahead of time to get their packaging policy.
- Get sleep the night before. Seriously!
- Maintain your normal eating/drinking routine the day of

The AICP Exam - What to Expect

The Exam Center

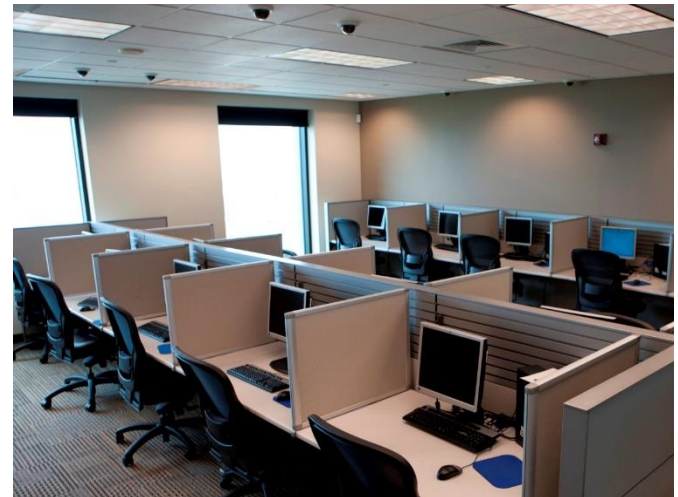
- Get to the testing center 15 minutes early to sign waver and provide ID's
- When you're called in to begin the exam, you'll first be asked to remove any layered clothing and may be asked to lift pant legs. You may also get wanded. 😊
- Lockers/key are available
- Bring extra layers if you get cold easily
- You may not bring anything into the room besides a sweater, your locker key, your ID, and the materials provided to you
- You may exit the testing room for beverage/snack/bathroom (clock keeps ticking)
- You will receive a scratch paper booklet, a sharpened pencil, and a basic calculator and you must return all three upon completion of the exam

The AICP Exam - What to Expect

During the Exam – The Testing Space

- There will be sound blocking headphones at your seat and white sound pumped into speakers
- You're in a room full of people taking various tests
- Proctors circle the room every 15 minutes
- Utilize the Computer-based Examination Tutorial to become familiar with the computer program ahead of time

www.planning.org/certification/examprep



The AICP Exam - What to Expect

Personal Experience + Questions

Exam Preparation

APA Resources

- AICP Exam Prep Package 3.0 (All Online): \$249
- Recommended Reading List (Dauntingly Lengthy)
- Computer-based Exam Tutorial (Must do!)
- APA Policy Guides (25 PDF's)
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- CPC Study Manual: \$10
- Planning Magazine
- JAPA/Zoning Practice/PAS Reports: \$40-\$60

www.planning.org/certification/examprep

Exam Preparation

Other Resources

- *Local Planning: Contemporary Principles and Practice: \$125*
- *APA Planning and Urban Design Standards: \$110*
- *Everyday Ethics for Practicing Planners: \$35*
- Planetizen AICP Exam Prep (All Online): \$245-\$720
 - www.planetizen.com/store/aicp

Exam Preparation

Unofficial Resources > Beware!

- www.planningprep.com
- www.studystack.com
- www.quizlet.com
- www.flashcardmachine.com

Exam Preparation

Unofficial Resources > Don't Beware!

- Planning Webcast Series
(www.youtube.com/planningwebcast)
- Northern New England Chapter
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XLGIvqJQSI)
search NNECAPA AICP Exam Prep on YouTube
- Florida Chapter
(www.floridaplanning.org/treasurecoast/aicp_links.pdf)
- Georgia Chapter
(georgiaplanning.org/aicp/aicp-exam-reviews)

Exam Preparation

Personal Experience + Questions

Certification Maintenance

- AICP designation now includes formal commitment to continuing professional development. CM launched in 2008.
- All new AICP members' CM Reporting Period will begin on January 1st after they pay their first dues. Each reporting period is two (2) years with a four (4) month grace period.
- Required to complete 32 credits in period (1 hour = 1 CM credit) – 1.5 must be Ethics and 1.5 must be Law.
- If you pass November 2015 exam: period begins January 1, 2017
- More information about the Certification Maintenance program can be found at www.planning.org/cm.

Certification Maintenance

Opportunities to Earn Credits – FREE!

- American Planning Association
(www.planning.org/cm/free)
(www.planning.org/tuesdaysatapa)
- Planning Webcasts Series
(www.ohioplanning.org/planningwebcast)
- Local APA Ohio events
(www.ohioplanning.org/calendar)

Certification Maintenance

Personal Experience + Questions

Periodic Table of City Planning Elements

Sample Formula

Basic Shopping Center

Chemical structure diagram showing a complex molecule with various atoms and bonds, including labels like Ca, Dp, S₈, Re, Pg, and Cf₂F₄.

88 Wo Place of Worship	89 Pg Parking	90 Ce College	91 Gc Golf Course	92 Hs Homeless Shelter	93 My Mortuary	94 Ac Animal Care	95 Pr Printer	96 Ga Gas Station	97 A Auto Service	98 Cw Carwash	99 F Fast Food	100 Sv Street Vendor	101 Cn Casino
90 He Heliport	91 Jl Jail	92 U University	93 La Landfill	94 Ce Cemetery	95 Au Adult Use	96 Ni Nightclub	97 Ba Bar	98 Pb Pub	99 Ls Liquor Store	100 Wi Winery	101 Ps Pawn Shop	102 Tt Tattoo Parlor	103 Tp Treatment Plant