



**American Institute  
of Certified Planners**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

A black arrow originates from the left edge of the red background and points towards the title.

# **AICP CERTIFICATION GUIDE**



**This guide contains valuable information  
to help you complete the  
AICP Certification Process.**  
*Guide updated December 2021.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>GENERAL INFORMATION .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>PATH TO BECOME AICP CERTIFIED .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>ELIGIBILITY PRE-CHECK.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<b><i>STEP 1: REGISTER AND SCHEDULE EXAM .....</i></b>	<b><i>5</i></b>
<i>SCHEDULING EXAM APPOINTMENTS .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENT CHANGES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<b><i>STEP 2: TAKE THE AICP CERTIFICATION EXAM .....</i></b>	<b><i>9</i></b>
<i>AICP CANDIDATE DESIGNATION .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<b><i>STEP 3: SUBMIT EDUCATION, WORK VERIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT.....</i></b>	<b><i>12</i></b>
<i>DOES MY EXPERIENCE QUALIFY? .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>PLANNING EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>APPENDIX 1: TESTING PROCEDURES &amp; SCORING THE EXAM .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>APPENDIX 2: SPECIAL TESTING CONDITIONS.....</i>	<i>26</i>

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### American Planning Association

The American Planning Association (APA) brings together thousands of people—practicing planners, citizens, elected officials—dedicated to creating great communities for all. 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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### AICP-Certified Planners

AICP-certified planners are members of the American Institute of Certified Planners. They have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of professional practice and a mastery of theories and tools of planning.

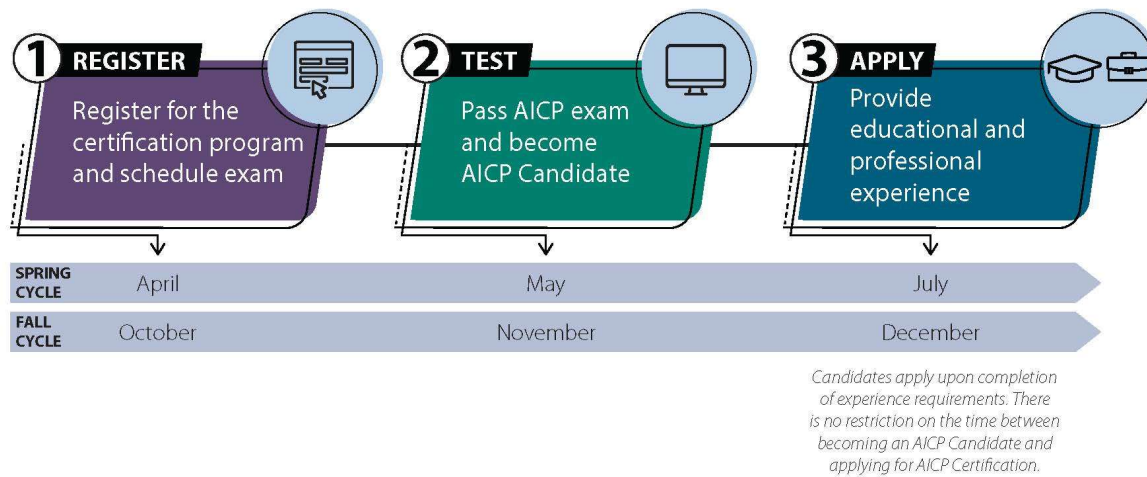
Becoming a Certified Planner is a multi-step process. APA members can register for the program and take the AICP Certification Exam. After passing the exam, the “AICP Candidate” designation can be used. The Planning Experience Assessment is the final step in which members demonstrate how their experience meets AICP’s definition of professional planning experience.

The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct defines those aspirational principles and Rules of Conduct to which a certified planner must adhere. AICP’s Certification Maintenance program helps certified planners 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 [planning.org/ethics](http://planning.org/ethics).

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

## PATH TO BECOME AICP CERTIFIED



The One Path to AICP Certification offers APA members a simple, three-step process to becoming AICP-certified. Planners can begin the certification process at any point in their professional planning careers.

**Step 1: Register** for the certification program *when prepared to test*, and schedule your exam.

**Step 2: Test** and earn the AICP Candidate designation when you pass.

**Step 3: Apply** your education, employment, and experience to meet the AICP professional planning practice requirements, and achieve AICP Certification.

Education	Required Years of Professional Planning Experience
Graduate degree in planning from a program accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB)	2
Bachelor's degree in planning from a PAB-accredited program	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/no degree information provided	8

## ELIGIBILITY PRE-CHECK

The [AICP Eligibility Pre-Check](#) is designed to help you understand how your experience fits into AICP Certification. While experience and education aren't submitted until Step 3, these resources provide answers to our most frequently asked questions.

- Use the **Planning Experience Assessment Worksheet** to review the professional planning experience requirements for certification.
- Does your experience meet AICP's definition of professional planning experience? Use the **Professional Planning Experience Worksheet** to confirm that your experience qualifies.
- Use the **Interactive Experience Calculator** to tally your years of professional planning experience to see how soon you can submit your Planning Experience Assessment.
- Wondering whether your master's degree qualifies as a non-PAB-accredited planning degree? Use the **Planning Curriculum Worksheet** to confirm how much professional planning experience you'll be required to provide.

## STEP 1: REGISTER AND SCHEDULE EXAM

### Register for *One Path to AICP* When Prepared to Test & Schedule Your Exam Appointment

When registering for the program, you must confirm that you will abide by the AICP Code of Ethics, confirm you understand the certification requirements, and confirm your experience is in professional planning and not in an allied profession, pre-professional, or administrative in nature. You'll then be able to register to take the AICP Certification Exam.

### General Exam Information

The AICP Certification Exam tests the knowledge and skills of individuals eligible for AICP Certification. The exam is developed by task forces of experts in the field of planning, guided by Prometric test specialists. The AICP Exam Committee oversees the exam to ensure it evaluates relevant professional planning knowledge and skills.

The AICP Certification Exam is designed to be taken by a national audience and focuses on a wide array of planning topics. The general content areas of the exam are outlined on the [APA website](#). The exam consists of 170 multiple-choice questions, of which 150 are scored. The remaining 20 are sample questions being considered for future examinations and therefore are not scored.

The exam is administered in a computer-based format at more than 300 Prometric test centers in the United States, Canada, and numerous locations internationally. Remote testing at home with ProProctor is also available. The examination is offered during two test windows every year—usually May and November. The exam is timed, and you will have 3.5 hours to complete it.

## SCHEDULING EXAM APPOINTMENTS

You must schedule an appointment to take the AICP Certification Exam. Here's how:

- You must register for the exam and pay your exam registration fee.
- You will receive an eligibility ID and instructions on how to set up your exam appointment with the testing provider, Prometric, during the testing window.
- You must have your eligibility ID to schedule an appointment to take the exam. You will be asked to supply your candidate identification number (the eligibility ID provided after you register) to confirm you're authorized to test during the current window. You can choose to take the exam at any Prometric test center site, or you can take it remotely at home with ProProctor.
- Once your exam has been scheduled, you will receive a confirmation number via e-mail. You will not receive any information by regular mail. Do not lose this confirmation number as you will need it if you need to make any changes to your appointment (see Changes to Your Test Appointment on page 8).

Contact APA at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) if you need to update the name on your registration to match your legal ID.

You must take the exam during the testing window you registered for, and you must make your appointment at least 48 hours before the test window opens.

### Where to Take the Exam

You can schedule, reschedule, and cancel exam appointments online at [prometric.com/aicp](https://prometric.com/aicp). Test centers are located domestically and internationally, and the website lists current test center locations, contact information for each site, and directions. 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.

You can 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. If you attempt to schedule at a test center that is

already at capacity, you will have the opportunity to select another date within the exam window or a test center as near as possible to the requested location. If you are unable to schedule your appointment online, call either Prometric's Candidate Service Call Center (CSCC) at 800-796-9853 or the Prometric test center of your choice.

### Remote Proctoring with ProProctor

Prometric's online proctor service, ProProctor, gives applicants the flexibility to take the AICP Certification Exam anywhere with a secure and reliable internet connection.

Before you select ProProctor as your testing option, you must confirm your computer meets the basic system requirements for online proctoring, complete a system check, and confirm your testing environment is suitable. Please review the [ProProctor User Guide](#) before selecting this testing option.

## TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENT CHANGES

This section covers policies that apply to rescheduling your AICP Certification Exam appointment within the same exam window or completing an open-ended transfer to a future exam cycle.

### Changes to Your Test Appointment (Within the Same Exam Window)

To change an appointment date, time, or testing method within the same exam window, you must cancel your scheduled appointment and reschedule your appointment through Prometric:

#### TO RE-SCHEDULE YOUR EXAM:

1. Log onto [prometric.com/aicp](https://prometric.com/aicp), or contact the test center directly by noon (ET) at least two full business days prior to your scheduled appointment.
2. Enter your 16-digit confirmation number and your last name to pull up your exam record.
3. Choose to cancel or re-schedule. Prometric will collect a \$35 fee for canceling or rescheduling an exam appointment 2–29 days before the scheduled test date (see the chart below for more information).

**Note:** You will not be permitted to cancel or reschedule your appointment with Prometric within two business days of your existing appointment and will forfeit your exam fee.

### Open-ended Transfers

When you register to take the exam, you are expected to take the test during the upcoming exam window. However, you may transfer your exam registration **to a future window** if circumstances change, and you are no longer able to take the exam. Members may transfer online without contacting APA. A \$100 transfer fee

must be paid [online](#) to complete the transfer. The transfer is not tied to the next exam cycle and may be used for any future exam window. Use the steps below to transfer your exam registration.

### TO TRANSFER:

1. Cancel your existing exam appointment with [Prometric](#) (see Changes to Your Test Appointment on page 8).
2. Visit [planning.org/certification/register](https://planning.org/certification/register), and click on the transfer link.
3. Confirm you've cancelled your exam appointment with Prometric by entering your 16-digit cancellation number; or confirm you haven't scheduled an appointment for the current exam window.
4. Submit the \$100 transfer fee payment. Any major credit card is accepted. Checks are not accepted.
5. Receive a transfer confirmation email that confirms the transfer was successfully completed and includes important information on how to register for a future exam as a transfer applicant.

PROMETRIC'S 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 member)
Less than 2 days before the test date	Full exam fee
Fail to appear for the scheduled test	Full exam fee
15 minutes after the scheduled start time on the test date and is refused entry	Full exam fee

### 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 cancel with Prometric but do not request a transfer or request a transfer after the deadline.
- 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 11).

In the cases listed above, you will not be allowed to reschedule your exam appointment 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**

Members who register to take the AICP Certification Exam must schedule a test appointment and sit for the exam during the upcoming exam window. Members 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. Members who register for the exam must either take the test or transfer.

# **STEP 2: TAKE THE AICP CERTIFICATION EXAM**

## **Test and Earn the “AICP Candidate” Designation After You Pass**

### **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. Members may not leave the testing room without the TCA's permission.

### **Remote Testing**

Launch your exam with [ProProctor](#) at least 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment. There may be a wait while your proctor sets up the exam.

The room you test in must be empty with the door closed. You may not have other people, children, or pets in the room while you take the exam. Your proctor must complete a 360-degree scan of your testing environment, so be prepared to turn your webcam, so they can view your room.

## Identification Requirements

To be admitted to the test center and to test for the exam remotely, you must have two forms of identification bearing your name and your signature. One or more must be a primary form of identification that includes a recent photo. If you do not have valid and appropriate identification, 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 your exam registration. Contact APA at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) if the name on your exam registration does not match your legal ID prior to scheduling an appointment.

PRIMARY FORMS OF ID	SECONDARY FORMS OF ID	INVALID ID
Valid passport	Military ID card	Draft classification card
Valid driver's license	Citizenship card	Student identification
Photo-bearing employee ID card	Valid credit card with signature	
	Social Security card	
	Bank automated teller card	

## Acceptable Differences in ID

If there is a discrepancy in your name as it appears on the photo identification and your exam registration, please refer to the examples of acceptable name variations listed below. If the name variation is listed, you may schedule an appointment to test. If the name variation is not listed in the examples of acceptable name variations shown below, you must contact APA via e-mail at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) before making an appointment to test. AICP staff will update your record and forward the updated record to Prometric. You will be notified once the appropriate changes have been made and will need to wait 48 hours before making an appointment.

If the name on your registration and ID differ because of a legal name change, you must present one of the following:

- Marriage certificate
- Divorce decree
- Legal name change

**NOTE:** The address in your exam appointment confirmation does not need to match the address provided on your identification. **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.**

ALLOWABLE NAME DISCREPANCIES	EXAMPLES
A single-letter discrepancy exists in examinee's name.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single letter difference: Johnson vs. Johmson</li> <li>• Single letter transposition: Alexander vs. Alexandre</li> <li>• Single letter omission: Schultz vs. Shultz</li> <li>• Single letter addition: Miller vs. Mialler or Miler</li> </ul>
One version of examinee's name has a middle initial or middle name while other does not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John E. Smith vs. John Smith</li> <li>• Mary R. Abernathy vs. Mary Rose Abernathy</li> </ul>
First name is provided formally on one document, but a typical variation is used on another document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Jones vs. Mike Jones</li> </ul>
Incorrect letters are used in a name on one document, but correct letters are used on another document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diller vs. Ditter</li> <li>• Dutton vs. Ditton</li> </ul>
Maiden name is used as a middle name on one document, while given middle name is used on another document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Elizabeth Smith vs. Mary Jones Smith</li> <li>• Russell, Evan vs. Evan Russell</li> </ul>
Suffixes to name should be ignored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example: Jr., Sr., II, III</li> </ul>

## AICP CANDIDATE DESIGNATION

All members who pass the exam earn the AICP Candidate designation. The designation will be added to your APA Profile and can be used after your name where applicable. You'll also have access to a digital certificate that you can link to your email signature, resume, social media, etc. The AICP Candidate designation will distinguish you from non-certified planners and can be leveraged with your employer. You must maintain your APA membership in order to use the AICP Candidate designation. Learn more about the [Value to Employers](#).

## STEP 3: SUBMIT EDUCATION, WORK VERIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

### Apply Your Education, Employment & Experience to the AICP Professional Planning Practice Requirements

To achieve AICP Certification, applicants must have completed a required number of years of professional planning experience based on their education. This section of the guide defines what combinations of education and professional experience meet the requirements for AICP Certification and describes the steps in the Planning Experience Assessment process. The Planning Experience Assessment is designed to allow applicants to demonstrate that their experience meets the AICP definition of professional planning experience.

To submit your Experience Assessment, you must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a current member of the American Planning Association (APA).
2. Pass the AICP Certification Exam.
3. Have completed one of the combinations of education and corresponding years of professional planning experience listed in the chart below:

Education <sup>1</sup>	Required Years of Professional Planning Experience
Graduate degree in planning from PAB-accredited program <sup>2</sup>	2
Bachelor's degree in planning from a PAB-accredited program	3
Graduate degree in planning from a program not accredited by the PAB <sup>3</sup>	3
Any other post-graduate, graduate, or undergraduate degree	4
No college degree/no degree information provided	8

<sup>1</sup> The degree may be obtained before, during, or after planning experience is obtained.

<sup>2</sup> Accredited degrees have been determined by the [Planning Accreditation Board](#) (PAB) to meet standards approved by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning or accredited by the Professional Standards Board (PSB) for Planning in Canada. 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 membership is filed. If you are unsure about the status of your planning degree, consult the PAB's list, or contact AICP.

<sup>3</sup> Use the [Planning Curriculum Worksheet](#) to determine whether a graduate degree qualifies as a planning degree.

## SECTION 1: EDUCATION HISTORY & VERIFICATION

Education information and supporting verification confirms you have received your degree, when the degree was conferred, and if the degree was in planning. This information is used to determine the amount of experience you are required to provide. APA will accept education verification in one of the following three forms (PDF, JPG or PNG formats are accepted):

- University transcript. E-transcripts are also accepted.
- Photocopy of diploma.
- Letter from school dean, registrar, or program director confirming that the degree was conferred. The letter must be printed on school/university letterhead and include the letter writer's title and contact information.

Not sure if your master's degree is considered a planning degree? Use the [Planning Curriculum Worksheet](#) to determine whether your degree meets AICP's definition of a non-PAB-accredited planning degree, and confirm how much professional planning experience you'll be required to provide.

## SECTION 2: EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Enter professional planning employment information for each position needed to meet the experience requirements:

- Employer
- Position title
- Dates of employment
- Full-time or part-time indication
- Current/former supervisor
- Email address of supervisor
- Detailed summary of professional planning tasks and responsibilities

Not sure if you have enough professional planning experience? Use the [Interactive Experience Calculator](#) to determine if you have enough experience.

## SECTION 3: PLANNING EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

Demonstrate your experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience as specified in the three criteria on pages 14-15 by selecting all items that apply from comprehensive lists that align with each criterion and completing open-text fields with brief written examples from your verified employment history provided in Section 2.

Not sure if your experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience? Use the [Planning Experience Worksheet](#) to confirm that your experience qualifies.

#### **SECTION 4: SUMMARY & REVIEW**

Review each section prior to submission. You will not be permitted to change or edit the assessment once it has been submitted.

#### **SECTION 5: SUBMIT & PAYMENT**

A fee is due upon submission. Your assessment will undergo a review, and APA will email you with your assessment status within 8 weeks of submission. If your assessment is approved, you've completed the requirements in the certification process and will receive an email with your last step, including your AICP initial dues, that will begin your AICP Certification.

## **DOES MY EXPERIENCE QUALIFY?**

This section describes what does and does not qualify as professional planning experience to help you describe how your experience meets APA's definition of professional planning experience in the assessment. The information is particularly helpful if you have not worked for or provided planning services to a municipality or regional planning agency.

Planners help create communities of lasting value by managing change. The goal of planning is to maximize the health, safety, and well-being of all people living in our communities. The AICP Commission has established three criteria that distinguish the experiences of professional planners from those of layperson planners, allied professionals, community stakeholders, and elected/appointed officials. To qualify as professional planning experience, an applicant's professional experience must align with all three criteria.

### **Criterion 1: Demonstrate a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness While Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation**

*Professional urban, rural, and regional planners apply multistep processes related to managing change in communities. Typical process steps include defining a problem or opportunity, setting goals and objectives, generating alternative strategies, selecting a preferred alternative, implementing the preferred strategy, and monitoring and evaluating strategy performance.*

## **Criterion 2: Evaluate Multiple Impacts to a Community When Implementing Professional Planning Tasks**

*Professional urban, regional, and rural planners consider the interrelated effects of policies, programs, projects, and actions that cause or influence change in communities. They identify and evaluate the potential positive and negative effects of specific planning interventions and work to shape those interventions in ways that minimize negative impacts and create quality-of-life improvements for the communities they serve.*

## **Criterion 3: Influence Public Decision-making in the Public Interest**

*Professional urban, regional, and rural planners influence decisions related to managing change in communities made by elected or appointed public officials in ways that protect or improve the well-being of the general public. This influence may be through direct communication with public officials or through intermediary processes.*

While AICP eligibility is more likely to be met in an agency (private or government), institute, or firm providing planning services, instruction, or research, this is not a prerequisite. APA encourages individuals with non-traditional, professional-level planning experience to apply.

Not sure whether your professional experience qualifies as planning experience? Use the [Planning Experience Worksheet](#) to determine whether your professional experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience.

## **VOLUNTEER PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE**

Examples of non-traditional professional planning experience include unpaid work or work done in a volunteer capacity. Like traditional professional planning experience, non-traditional professional planning experience must be submitted as a separate position in Section 2: Employment History.

Non-traditional professional planning experience must involve a high level of personal responsibility and substantive technical accomplishments. For example, volunteer work at a community-based organization would not usually be considered professional planning experience if the applicant was only responsible for setting up meetings and/or supporting administrative functions such as data entry, file management, providing general customer service, etc. However, the experience may be considered 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.)

For volunteer service performed as a function or extension of a salaried planning position (e.g., appointment to an advisory committee) to be eligible as an example of professional planning experience, applicants must include this service as part of their job description for the position in Section 2: Employment History.

## **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 “Work in Related Fields” section on page 19 for more details.

## **INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**

Because eligibility for AICP Certification depends on a combination of education and employment experience, these variables must remain separate and distinct. Applicants can only count internships (or any professional planning work completed while enrolled in a degree program) that satisfy the following conditions toward their professional planning experience requirement:

- The internship cannot be part of coursework for a grade or for course credit. This must be documented in the AICP assessment.
- The internship cannot be a requirement to complete the degree program.
- The work as an intern must meet all criteria for professional planning experience (i.e., this work is not pre-professional in nature).

An example of experience that can count toward meeting eligibility requirements includes internships completed independent of degree requirements.

## **Experience That Does Not Qualify**

### **WORK AT A PRE-PROFESSIONAL LEVEL**

Although there is often a fine line between professional experience and pre-professional experience, the latter generally involves less personal responsibility and less substantive technical accomplishments. Work at a pre-professional level may include substantial time dedicated to providing general information to staff and the public in the administration of specific planning program areas or ordinances; performing routine office tasks in designated program areas, including data entry, file management, copying and answering the telephone;



and preparing public notices or property owner verifications and maps, charts, or tables of limited complexity.

## **ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS**

While contributions by mayors and 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 in this capacity does not constitute professional planning experience.

## **WORK IN RELATED FIELDS**

### **(NOT GENERALLY CONSIDERED PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE)**

There are important distinctions between planners and allied professionals and between 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, real estate development, etc.) and disciplines (humanities, psychology, etc.) often work with planners, they do not necessarily have the same knowledge base, skill set, or approach.

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 be prorated into the full-time equivalent of one year of professional planning experience.

Unsure if your professional experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning? Use the [Planning Experience Worksheet](#) to determine whether your experience meets requirements.

The following illustrates types of work in related fields sometimes performed by planners, but more often by other professionals. These areas are generally not considered to be professional planning experience and will not satisfy the experience requirements.

- Site platting and engineering
- Traffic engineering or highway design
- Land surveying or mapping
- Facility programming
- Community organization
- Social work
- Market, physical, and social science research and analysis not connected to a planning process

- Construction/development logistics and management
- Business development

## PLANNING EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

Applicants must complete the Planning Experience Assessment to verify that their work experience meets the three criteria established by AICP to define professional planning experience. For the Planning Experience Assessment, applicants must complete the following:

For Criterion 1, **Demonstrate a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness While Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation**, applicants must (1) draw from the entirety of their professional planning experience to indicate the type(s) of planning processes they have applied and the professional planning skills and tools they have used in applying those processes, and (2) provide a brief written example of a planning process they have applied and a description of a skill or tool they have used.

For Criterion 2, **Evaluate Multiple Impacts to a Community When Implementing Professional Planning Tasks**, applicants must (1) draw from the entirety of their professional planning experience to indicate the type(s) of planning interventions they have participated in, the multiple community consequences they have considered, and the benefits to community quality of life that their work has resulted in, and (2) provide a brief written example of a planning intervention they have applied, the multiple community consequences they considered in that planning intervention, and the benefits to community quality of life that resulted.

For Criterion 3, **Influence Public Decision-making in the Public Interest**, applicants must (1) draw from the entirety of their professional planning experience to indicate the method(s) of influence they apply to shape public decision-making, the type(s) of public decisions that they or their work influenced, and the ways in which those decisions serve the public interest, and (2) provide a brief written example of a method of influence they have applied, a type of public decision that they or their work influenced, and the way(s) in which that decision served the public interest.

The Planning Experience Assessment offers sample written responses to guide applicants in providing specific project examples for each criterion.

You will also be asked to attest to the accuracy and truthfulness of your responses and your compliance with the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

If you are unable to complete the form based on your current professional planning experience, you have not yet met the criteria required to attain AICP Certification. You will need to complete the certification

process at a later time when you have gained additional professional planning experience to demonstrate that you have met each of the criteria requirements.

**[The Planning Experience Assessment Worksheet can be downloaded here](#)**. You will be required to complete the assessment online as the final step in the certification process.

## **Incomplete or Denied Assessments**

Upon submitting your education history and verification, employment history, and Planning Experience Assessment, AICP staff will review your submission for completeness. If required education verification or employment history information is missing, you will be notified that your submission is incomplete, and you will need to submit the missing information for your application to move forward.

AICP staff will then review your Planning Experience Assessment. If you have not checked the minimum number of items required, or if your written examples do not meet requirements, your assessment will be denied. If your assessment is denied, you will receive notification via email. The email will include information that addresses the specific reasons behind the denial decision. Depending on your situation, you may need to wait to gain more professional planning experience, or simply reapply in the next application window with more focused assessment responses that better demonstrate how your work experience meets the professional planning experience criteria required for certification.

## **Appeals**

Members whose assessments are denied have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals are reviewed by the AICP National Membership Standards Committee.

If you decide to appeal, please email us at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) with your letter of appeal before the deadline specified in your denial notice. An APA staff member will contact you via email once the AICP Membership Standards Committee has reached a decision.

The appeal letter must be professional in tone and must explain why your assessment should have been approved. Your appeal letter must demonstrate how your existing assessment meets the professional planning criteria requirements. It should clearly address the reasons for denial cited in the notice and may clarify the information provided in your submitted assessment to demonstrate how you have met the criteria; however, it cannot include new or supplemental examples and materials that were not included as part of your original submission.

When writing your appeal letter:

- **DO** carefully review the denial information provided.
- **DO** prepare a professional appeal letter that addresses each point of denial in your appeal letter.
- **DO** cite specific information from your original assessment response(s), and articulate how it meets the requirements outlined in the criteria guidance above.
- **DON'T** provide additional information that was not included in your original submission. Only the information provided in the original assessment may be considered in your appeal.

## APPENDIX 1: TESTING PROCEDURES & SCORING THE EXAM

### TESTING PROCEDURES

To ensure that all members take the exam 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 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.
- 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 TCA your identification to be readmitted to the room.
- You will be provided a multifunctioning calculator. It will be a basic, nonprogrammable, nonprinting, four-function calculator with percent and square-root buttons. This will be the only calculator permitted to use, if needed.
- You cannot 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 may not bring scratch paper into the testing room. The TCA will give you scratch paper, which may be replaced as needed during testing. When you have finished with the exam and a post-examination survey, the TCA will collect all your scratch paper.
- You will not be allowed to bring your own scratch paper, pencil, or calculator into the testing room.
- You will not be permitted to continue the exam beyond the 3.5 hour time limit. An on-screen clock will count down your time remaining.
- Visitors are not permitted at the test center.

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.
- If you wish to leave the room during the exam, you must secure the TCA's permission.

### **COMPUTER-BASED EXAM 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 3.5 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 the tutorial, you may not return to it.

### **EXAMINATION LOGISTICS**

Your scheduled appointment time is four hours. You will have 3.5 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. Scored and unscored questions and content areas are distributed randomly throughout the exam.

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

## **EXIT SURVEY**

At the conclusion of the exam, 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.

## **EXAMINEE MISCONDUCT**

The following are examples of behaviors that are misconduct. These will not be tolerated, and you will not be permitted to complete the exam.

- Giving or receiving assistance of any kind.
- Using any unauthorized references.
- Attempting to take the exam for someone else.
- Failing to follow testing regulations or the instructions of the TCA.
- Creating a disturbance of any kind.
- Copying, removing, or attempting to remove exam 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 exam.
- Leaving the testing room without permission.
- Using electronic communications equipment, such as cellular phones.
- Bringing in a calculator.

## **REPORTING TEST CENTER IRREGULARITIES**

While at the test center, should you experience a delay in taking your exam 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.

## **SCORE REPORTS**

Your scores are confidential and are released directly to APA by Prometric. Though you will receive a pass/fail indication immediately after completing the exam on your computer screen, you will receive an official score report by email about 2 hours after completion of the exam. Your official score report will show a total scaled score and will indicate whether you have passed or failed. To protect your privacy and to maintain the confidentiality of test results, score information will not be given over the phone. 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 [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org). Electronic score data files will be retained by Prometric for two years.

APA retains this information in perpetuity.

You can retrieve a copy of your official score report at [scorereports.prometric.com](https://scorereports.prometric.com) by entering your 16-digit appointment confirmation number and your last name.

## DIAGNOSTIC SCORES

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

## EQUATING AND SCALING

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

For example, presume 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, based on 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 because 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.

**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.**

Scaling allows scores to be reported on a common scale. Instead of having to remember 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.

## **RELIABILITY**

Reliability is a concept that refers to the accuracy of test scores, such as the scaled scores derived for the AICP Certification Exam. 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 Certification Exam 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 exam. Because 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 exam 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 Certification Exam.

## **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, you will be contacted and notified of procedures to resolve any validity issues concerning your score.



### **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

[aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org)

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

### **IF YOU RETAKE THE EXAM**

If you decide to take the exam 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 exam; you must retake the entire exam again and pay the full exam fee.

## APPENDIX 2: SPECIAL TESTING CONDITIONS

### AICP DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP

A limited number of scholarships are available through APA Chapters. Each chapter is allotted a minimum of one scholarship. Larger chapters may have more available. The scholarship will reduce the cost of the exam registration fee to \$85 and the planning experience assessment fee to \$85. To learn more about the requirements, please contact your [Chapter's Professional Development Officer \(PDO\)](#).

### GI BILL EXAM REIMBURSEMENT

Military veterans and their surviving dependents who are seeking AICP Certification can now ask the Veterans Administration to reimburse the certification fees. Veterans interested in the GI Bill Education Benefits Program may find information about reimbursement for AICP Certification at [benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing\\_certification.asp](https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp).

### MEMBERS OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

The exam is administered in a computer-based format to members outside of the United States and Canada during the same May and November testing windows. The exam can be administered at Prometric international sites or prearranged sites such as embassies or universities. You can view international Prometric test center sites at [prometric.com/aicp](https://prometric.com/aicp). There is no additional fee to take the AICP Certification Exam outside of the United States.

### SPECIAL TESTING ARRANGEMENTS

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

Prometric requires written documentation of the disability from your doctor or another qualified medical professional. This written documentation should specify the accommodations needed for the applicant and must be emailed to APA staff at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@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 you the opportunity to be tested in an equivalent manner with other members, but not to provide an advantage over others. A list of pre-approved personal items for testing accommodations can be found on the [Prometric website](#).

## **LAPSED AICP MEMBERS**

Former AICP members whose membership lapsed and who are not eligible for reinstatement must sit for the AICP Exam to reestablish certification. These members will be preapproved to sit for the exam and are not required to write the professional planning essays or provide verification of education or employment. Lapsed AICP members must contact APA staff at [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) prior to starting an application to ensure the preapproved status is in place.

## **OTHER NATIONAL CERTIFYING INSTITUTIONS**

APA members who are also members in good standing with another professional planning national or international certifying institute that administers an exam as part of their planning certification may be exempted from the Planning Experience Assessment. Please contact [aicp@planning.org](mailto:aicp@planning.org) during an open registration window with your APA ID number and a verification letter confirming your membership with the other institute. APA staff will set up your exemption status, then email you with instructions to register for the AICP Certification Exam.