

**Ventricular Assist Device-Certification**

**(VAD-C™)**

**Candidate Handbook**

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All questions and requests for information about the durable **Ventricular Assist Device Certification Examination** should be directed to:

VAD-CB

UH South F7854B

1500 E Medical Center Drive SPC 5230

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-5230

Website: <https://iccac.global/vad-c-certification/info>

Email: vadc@vadcoordinator.org

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All questions and requests for information about **examination scheduling** should be directed to:

Psychological Services Incorporated (PSI)

18000 W 105th Street

Olathe, KS 66061-7543

Phone: (800) 211-2754

Website: [Examschedule@psionline.com](mailto:Examschedule@psionline.com)

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**About VAD-CB and VAD-C™ Certification**

Creating a certification to validate the clinical expertise it takes to care for durable ventricular assist devices (dVAD) patients has been a goal of the International Consortium of Circulatory Assist Clinicians (ICCAC) since the inception of the society in 2007. In 2019, the VAD-CB (Ventricular Assist Device Certification Board) was created to begin the lengthy process of certification test development. In collaboration with Psychological Services Incorporated (PSI), an independent testing agency, as well as over 60 volunteers, the goal for the first series of examinations is to roll out September 1st, 2022. The purpose of this certification is to “validate the expertise of clinicians that care for the durable ventricular assist device population”, and in turn will promote the highest standards possible in our specialty.

**Independent Testing Agency**

The VAD-CB has contracted with Psychological Services Incorporated (PSI) to assist in the development, administration, scoring and analysis of the ventricular assist device certification examination. For over 50 years, PSI has been known for their certification examination development for professional organizations.

**Nondiscrimination Policy**

The VAD-CB and PSI does not discriminate among candidates on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, marital status or any other protected characteristics.

**About the VAD-C ™ Examination**

The VAD-C™ examination consists of 100 multiple choice questions, including 20 questions that are not scored but are pretested for future use. Candidates will have up to 2 hours (120 minutes) to complete the exam.

**ICCAC Membership Not an Eligibility Requirement**

Membership in the International Consortium of Circulatory Assist Clinicians (ICCAC) is not an eligibility requirement for sitting for the VAD-C™ certification.

**VAD-C™ Eligibility Criteria**

There are three primary criteria for candidacy certification. These include:

* Employed in a position that includes care for Left Ventricular Assist Device patients for **at least 1 year**. The employing health care organization is accredited in Quality and Safety and has a program that is certified (or affiliated with) in Ventricular Assist Devices by an approved Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) agency (or international equivalent), **-OR-** an entity that supports those organizations (with the exception of those that are solely pediatric and not able to be certified).
* Work in an applicable profession:
  + Registered Nurse (such as RN, LPN)
  + Advanced Practice Providers (such as Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant)
  + Physicians (such as MD, DO)
  + Perfusionist (such as CCP)
  + Biomedical Engineer (Bachelor’s degree or above)
  + Equipment Specialist (Associates degree or above)
  + International Equivalent
* Applicant **MUST** hold a licensure in the respective field or equivalent educational degree

**Name and Address Changes**

As a candidate, you are responsible for notifying the VAD-CB should your name and/or address change at any time before or after you become certified. Failure to do so may result in not receiving important information necessary for certification or recertification.

Any name or address changes should be forwarded to (email) [vadc@vadcoordinator.org](mailto:vadc@vadcoordinator.org).

You are responsible for renewing your certification prior to the expiration date, even if you do not receive a renewal notice.

**Examination Fees**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Initial Cost of First Test | Retake Cost if Unsuccessful |
| Computer-Based Testing | $375 US | $75 US |

This includes a non-refundable application fee of $62. Payment may be made by credit card through PSI when scheduling your exam.

**Examination Preparation**

Below are resources available to assist in your preparation to take the examination.

ICCAC Core Curriculum:The core curriculum is a comprehensive review of the care of advanced heart failure patients with VADs. It is available to ICCAC members only at iccac.global

PowerPoint Presentation PDF file from the Exam Preparation Development Committee: The exam preparation materials are intended to provide candidates with an overview of the content that is the basis for exam questions. Review of these materials does not guarantee that candidates will pass the exam. This material is open to the public and can be found at iccac.global.

VAD-C ™ Certification Exam Preparation Document: This document was created by the exam preparation committee and is located at iccac.global under the “VAD-C Certification” tab. This document is more than 150 pages of outline regarding the blue print of the test.

**Examination Blue Print Matrix**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Section Title and Subtitles** | **# of Questions** |
| **1** | **Pre-Operative Management** | **16** |
| **1A** | **Patient Assessment and Diagnostics** | **4** |
| **1A1** | **Indications for VAD Candidacy** |  |
| **1A2** | **Absolute Contraindications for VAD Candidacy** |  |
| **1A3** | **Relative Contraindications for VAD Candidacy** |  |
| **1B** | **Cardiac Comorbidities** | **3** |
| **1B1** | **Arrhythmia** |  |
| **1B2** | **Valve and Root Disease** |  |
| **1B3** | **Intracardiac Thrombus** |  |
| **1B4** | **Valvular Insufficiency** |  |
| **1B5** | **Left Ventricular Cavity Dimension** |  |
| **1C** | **Non-Cardiac Comorbidities** | **3** |
| **1C1** | **Pulmonary Hypertension** |  |
| **1C2** | **Diabetes** |  |
| **1C3** | **Neurological Disorders** |  |
| **1C4** | **Malignancies** |  |
| **1C5** | **Arterial Disease** |  |
| **1D** | **Pre-Operative Optimization** | **3** |
| **1D1** | **Renal** |  |
| **1D2** | **Hepatic and Gastrointestinal** |  |
| **1D3** | **Pulmonary** |  |
| **1D4** | **Coagulation** |  |
| **1D5** | **Metabolic and Endocrine** |  |
| **1D6** | **Resolution of Active Infection** |  |
| **1E** | **Operative Technique and Procedures** | **3** |
| **1E1** | **Sternotomy** |  |
| **1E2** | **Thoracotomy** |  |
| **1E3** | **Cardiopulmonary Bypass** |  |
| **1E4** | **Concomitant Procedures** |  |
| **2** | **VAD Management** | **26** |
| **2A** | **Pump Factors Affecting Flow** | **5** |
| **2A1** | **Cannula Position** |  |
| **2A2** | **Pump Thrombus** |  |
| **2A3** | **RPM** |  |
| **2A4** | **Hematocrit** |  |
| **2A5** | **Outflow-Graft Integrity** |  |
| **2B** | **Physiological Factors Affecting Flow** | **5** |
| **2B1** | **Aortic Valve** |  |
| **2B2** | **Hydration Status** |  |
| **2B3** | **Tamponade** |  |
| **2B4** | **Afterload** |  |
| **2C** | **Power Sources for VAD** | **4** |
| **2C1** | **Direct Current (Battery) versus Alternating Current (Wall)** |  |
| **2C2** | **Battery Hygiene** |  |
| **2C3** | **Grounding** |  |
| **2D** | **Parameters for VAD** | **4** |
| **2D1** | **Flow** |  |
| **2D2** | **Power** |  |
| **2D3** | **Speed** |  |
| **2D4** | **Pulsatility/Peak-Trough** |  |
| **2E** | **Driveline Management** | **4** |
| **2E1** | **Standard Dressing Supplies** |  |
| **2E2** | **Stabilization** |  |
| **2E3** | **Velour-Burying** |  |
| **2F** | **Safety Measures** | **4** |
| **2F1** | **Avoidance of Water Submersion** |  |
| **2F2** | **Avoidance of Electrostatic Discharge** |  |
| **2F3** | **Avoidance of Electromagnetic Fields (e.g., MRI, scrap-metal magnet, metal detectors)** |  |
| **2F4** | **Availability of Power Sources** |  |
| **2F5** | **Avoidance of High-Impact Activity (e.g., contact sports)** |  |
| **2F6** | **Travel Considerations (e.g., electrical outlets, travel security)** |  |
| **3** | **Peri-Operative Management** | **19** |
| **3A** | **Anticoagulation Management** | **3** |
| **3A1** | **Anticoagulation and Antiplatelet Medications** |  |
| **3A2** | **Intravenous Anticoagulation** |  |
| **3A3** | **Long-Term Anticoagulation** |  |
| **3A4** | **Anticoagulation Metrics** |  |
| **3A5** | **Factors affecting INR** |  |
| **3A6** | **Bridging and Reversing** |  |
| **3B** | **Post-Operative Hemodynamics** | **3** |
| **3B1** | **Shock** |  |
| **3B2** | **Hemodynamics Parameters** |  |
| **3B3** | **Right Ventricular Failure** |  |
| **3C** | **Post-Surgical Care** | **3** |
| **3C1** | **Incision Management** |  |
| **3C2** | **Arterial Blood Gas** |  |
| **3C3** | **Blood Pressure** |  |
| **3C4** | **Transition to Progressive Care** |  |
| **3D** | **Driveline Exit Site** | **3** |
| **3D1** | **Aseptic Technique for Dressing Changes** |  |
| **3D2** | **Exit Site Assessment and Diagnostics** |  |
| **3D3** | **Modalities to Treat Exit Site Infections** |  |
| **3D4** | **Adverse Outcomes of Exit Site Infections** |  |
| **3E** | **Complications** | **7** |
| **3E1** | **Driveline Integrity/Fracture** |  |
| **3E2** | **Pump Thrombosis** |  |
| **3E3** | **Cerebrovascular Accidents** |  |
| **3E4** | **Bleeding Diatheses** |  |
| **3E5** | **Arrhythmias** |  |
| **3E6** | **Valvular Insufficiency (e.g., aortic, tricuspid)** |  |
| **4** | **Continuation of Care** | **19** |
| **4A** | **Community-Based Health Services** | **3** |
| **4A1** | **Healthcare Professionals (e.g., cardiology, dialysis, cardiac rehab, home health)** |  |
| **4A2** | **Extended Care Facilities (e.g. acute, sub-acute, long-term)** |  |
| **4A3** | **Outpatient Follow-Up** |  |
| **4B** | **Pre-Hospital Emergency Management** | **3** |
| **4B1** | **Emergency Protocols (e.g., ACLS, BLS)** |  |
| **4B2** | **Emergency Patient Assessment (e.g., hemodynamics, perfusion, device alarms)** |  |
| **4B3** | **Emergency Transport (e.g., selecting destination, transportation methods)** |  |
| **4B4** | **Emergency Management of Pump Stop (e.g., power loss, restart)** |  |
| **4C** | **Myocardial Recovery** | **3** |
| **4C1** | **Testing for Myocardial Recovery** |  |
| **4C2** | **Diagnoses Associated with Myocardial Recovery** |  |
| **4C3** | **Medical Therapy Optimization to Promote Recovery** |  |
| **4C4** | **Explant and Post-Explant Care** |  |
| **4D** | **End-of-Life Care** | **4** |
| **4D1** | **Advanced Directives** |  |
| **4D2** | **Ethics pertaining to End-of-Life Care** |  |
| **4D3** | **Pump Deactivation** |  |
| **4D4** | **Palliative Care** |  |
| **4E** | **Quality of Life** | **3** |
| **4E1** | **Patient and Caregiver Education** |  |
| **4E2** | **Patient and Caregiver Advocacy (e.g., goals of care, caregiver burden)** |  |
| **4E3** | **Functional Status (e.g., ADLs, IADLs)** |  |
| **4E4** | **Community-Based Support Systems (e.g., school, work, support groups)** |  |
| **4F** | **Transplant Eligibility** | **3** |
| **4F1** | **Monitoring for transplant eligibility** |  |
| **4F2** | **Optimizing for transplant eligibility** |  |
| **4F3** | **Maintaining transplant eligibility** |  |

**Application Process**

Applications are submitted on-line then reviewed by the Exam Candidate Review Committee (ECRC) to ensure candidates meet criteria. To submit an application, go to ICCAC.global and click on the “VAD-C Certification” tab.

**Application for Computer-Based Testing Examination**

The steps for application submission are as follows:

Application process

Go to ICCAC.global

Click the VAD-C Certification page

Select application google form

Complete every field on the form.

Click submit

Review process:

ECRC committee reviews each application

Approved applications are forwarded to PSI

1. PSI sends an email with information on scheduling date and location of exam

The exam date and location are scheduled online. Candidates sit for the exam at the test taking centers supported by PSI.

**Scheduling an Examination**

Once you have been approved and have received your letter from VAD-CB, soon after you will receive an email from PSI with instructions of how to schedule your examination online.

**Online Scheduling**

PSI sends emails to acceptable candidates with instructions on how to schedule the exam appointment. A unique VAD-C identification number is generated for each candidate it is found in the approval email. Once scheduled, each candidate will receive an email with the time and location of the Assessment Center. A confirmation notice is emailed.

Special Accommodations requests will need to be provided at the time of your application submission to the VAD-CB Exam Candidate Review Committee. The ECRC will then review the request and either approve or deny the request. If approved, PSI will be notified of this and after receiving the initial exam scheduling email from PSI, you will need to follow the instructions under “**Special Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities**” to schedule your test with the approved accommodations.

See below for special arrangements for candidates with disabilities. You need to be prepared to submit your accommodation need verification prior to scheduling your exam. The special form to submit through PSI needs to be submitted at least 45 days prior to the desired examination date.

**Special Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities**

PSI complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and strive to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. The ADA as defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others having such a condition. PSI will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities.

Candidates requesting special accommodations must submit their original request first to the ECRC of the VAD-CB for approval. This approval will be sent to PSI with candidate information. Once receiving your confirmation email to schedule your exam from PSI, please you will be directed to fill out the *Request for Special Examination Accommodations* form by going to: <https://psi-cdexp.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new?ticket_form_id=360000991112>. Further communication will come from PSI regarding scheduling your exam with the requested accommodations.

Wheelchair access is available at all established Assessment Centers. Candidates must advise PSI at the time of scheduling that wheelchair access is necessary.

1. Candidates with visual, sensory, physical or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements and will be reviewed by PSI.
2. PSI will review the submitted forms and will contact you regarding the decision for accommodations with plans to guide you in scheduling this exam.

**Assessment Center Locations**

PSI Assessment Centers have been selected to provide accessibility to the most candidates globally. A current list of United States-based PSI Assessment Centers are located at: https://apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PSI-Test-Center-Network-Locations.pdf. Non-United States-based PSI testing centers are listed here: https://www.gisci.org/Portals/0/PDF%27s/PSI%20International%20Locations.pdf

**Holidays**

Examinations will not be offered on the following United States holidays:

New Year’s Day

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

President’s Day

Good Friday

Memorial Day

Independence Day (and July 5th)

Labor Day

Columbus Day

Veteran’s Day

Thanksgiving Holiday

Christmas Holiday

New Year’s Eve Day

**Rescheduling or Cancelling an Examination**

To cancel or reschedule an exam call PSI Candidate Services at 800-211-2754. To reschedule, candidates must call at least 2 business days before the appointment. Please be advised that candidates must speak with a Candidate Services representative directly to confirm the new exam date. Voice Mail messages are not acceptable means to communicate the need to change the exam appointment. The following schedule applies.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examination scheduled on…** | **PSI MUST be contacted by 3pm Central Standard Time to reschedule the Examination by the previous …** |
| Monday | Wednesday |
| Tuesday | Thursday |
| Wednesday | Friday |
| Thursday | Monday |
| Friday | Tuesday |

**Missed Appointments and Cancellations**

Exam and registration fees are forfeited for candidates that miss the exam appointment. Candidates who miss appointments will have to resubmit an application and pay the new fees. Conditions requiring a new application and fees:

Failure to contact PSI at least two business days prior to rescheduling

Reschedule a second time

Late arrival to assessment center, 15 minutes late

Failure to report to assessment center

Discovery of personal belongings, as defined below, in the testing area will result in immediate dismissal from the assessment center, inability to take exam, and forfeit fees

**Inclement Weather, Power Failure or Emergency**

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination, PSI will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation, and subsequent rescheduling, of an examination. All scheduled candidates will receive notification following the examination regarding rescheduling or reapplication procedures. The examination will usually not be rescheduled if the Assessment Center personnel are able to open the Assessment Center.

Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be cancelled at an Assessment Center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification following the examination regarding rescheduling or reapplication procedures.

If power to an Assessment Center is temporarily interrupted during an exam administration, your examination will be restarted. The responses provided up to the point of interruption will be intact, but for security reasons the questions will be scrambled.

**Taking the Examination**

**Computer-Based Examination**

The exam is administered via computer at PSI designated assessment centers. Computer/ typing skills are not necessary to sit for the exam. Report on time to the assessment center as candidates who report 15 minutes late will not be admitted and forfeit the appointment and fees.

**Identification**

On the day of your examination appointment, report to the Assessment Center no later than your scheduled testing time. Once you arrive at the location, look for signs indicating PSI Assessment Center check-in. To gain admission to the assessment center, you must present one form of identification, with a current photograph. This form of identification MUST BE CURRENT (not expired), match the name registered through your application documents, and include your current name and signature. You will be required to sign a roster for verification of identity.

* Examples of identification may include: driver’s license; state identification card with photograph; passport; or military identification card with photograph.
  + This form of identification also is required to have a signature
* If the name on this document is DIFFERENT than it appears on your identification, you MUST bring proof of your name change (e.g., marriage license, divorce decree or court order).
* You will NOT be permitted to sit for your scheduled examination if your name on your identification does not match EXACTLY as your name on your candidate application (e.g., name on application says Tommy Nuance and your identification says Thomas Nuance).
* Candidates need to check identification documents during the application process and ensure that the application matches the identification.

**Security**

PSI administration and security standards are designed to ensure all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The Assessment Center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

* Examinations are proprietary. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), pagers or cellular phones are allowed in the testing room. Possession of a cellular phone or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.
* No calculators are allowed.
* No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.

**Personal Belongings**

No personal items, valuables, or weapons should be brought to the Assessment Center. Only wallets and keys are permitted. Coats must be left outside the testing room. You will be provided a soft locker to store your wallet and/or keys with you in the testing room. You will not have access to these items until after the examination is completed. Please note the following items will not be allowed in the testing room except securely locked in the soft locker.

* Watches
* Hats

Once you have placed everything into the soft locker, you will be asked to pull out your pockets to ensure they are empty. If all personal items will not fit in the soft locker, you will not be able to test. The site will not store any personal belongings. If any personal items are observed in the testing room after the examination has started, you will be dismissed and the administration of the exam will be forfeited.

**Examination Restrictions**

* Pencils will be provided during check-in.
* You will be provided with one piece of scratch paper at a time to use during the examination, unless noted on the sign-in roster for a particular candidate. You must return the scratch paper to the supervisor at the completion of testing, or you will not receive your score report.
* No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the Assessment Center.
* No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
* Eating, drinking or smoking will not be permitted in the Assessment Center.
* You may take a break whenever you wish but you will not be allowed additional time to make up for time lost during breaks.

**Timed Examination**

You will be allowed 120 minutes to take this examination.

Once checked in and settled at your designated computer, you will begin the timed examination. Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on your screen.

The computer monitors the time you spend on the examination. The examination will terminate if you exceed the time allowed. You may click on the “time” box in the lower menu bar on the screen or select the Time key to monitor your time. A digital clock indicates the time remaining for you to complete the examination. The Time feature may be turned off during the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the lower right of the screen. Choices of answers to the examination question are identified as A, B, C, or D. You must indicate your choice by either typing in the letter in the response box in the lower left portion of the computer screen or clicking on the option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish during the examination time limit.

To move to the next question, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right portion of the screen or select the NEXT key. This action will move you forward through the examination question by question. If you wish to review any question or questions, click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow key to move backward through the examination.

An examination question may be left unanswered for return later in the examination session. Questions may also be bookmarked for later review by clicking in the blank square to the right of the Time button. Click on the hand icon or select the NEXT key to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the examination. To identify all unanswered and bookmarked questions, repeatedly click on the hand icon or press the NEXT key. When the examination is completed, the number of examination questions answered is reported. If not all questions have been answered and there is time remaining, return to the examination and answer those questions. Be sure to provide an answer for each examination question before ending the examination. There is no penalty for guessing.

**Candidate Comments**

During the examination, comments may be provided for any question by clicking on the button displaying an exclamation point (!) to the left of the Time button. This opens a dialogue box where comments may be entered. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

**Following the Examination**

After completing the examination, you are asked to complete a short evaluation of your examination experience. Then you will be instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive an examination completion report. Please note, the first 100 or so test takers may experience a delay in receiving their scores due to internal analyses required at the initiation of the test.

**Scores Cancelled by the VAD-CB or PSI**

PSI is responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction, or misconduct by a candidate, may cause a score to be suspect. VAD-CB and PSI reserve the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of its regulations is discovered.

**All Examination Candidates**

**Failing to Report For An Examination**

If you fail to report for an examination, you will forfeit the registration and all fees paid to take the examination. A new application form and examination fee are required to reapply for examination.

**Misconduct**

If you engage in any of the following conduct during the examination you may be dismissed, your scores will not be reported and examination fees will not be refunded. Examples of misconduct include the following:

* Create a disturbance, are abusive or otherwise uncooperative;
* Display and/or use electronic communications equipment such as pagers, cellular phones in the examination room
* Talk or participate in conversation with other examination candidates;
* Give or receive help or are suspected of doing so;
* Leave the Assessment Center during the administration;
* Attempt to record examination questions or make notes;
* Attempt to take the examination for someone else;
* Are observed with personal belongings; or
* Are observed with notes, books or other aids without it being noted on the roster.

**Copyrighted Examination Questions**

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of the VAD-CB. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may subject you to severe civil and criminal penalties.

**Confidentiality**

Information about candidates for testing and their examination results are considered confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain no information identifiable with any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate.

**After the Examination**

**If You Pass the Examination**

Each successful candidate will be sent an 8 ½ “ x 11” certificate, certification wallet card and your one-of-a-kind VAD-C™ Lapel Pin. In addition, the candidate will be authorized to use the designation “VAD-C” demonstrating their success in passing the certification examination. Names of successful candidates will be posted to the ICCAC main webpage, at iccac.global.

**If You Do Not Pass the Examination**

Candidates who do not pass the examination are able to re-take the exam at a minimum of 45 days following the initial attempt, with the second attempt being before the end of the 90-day candidacy period in order to retake the examination at the reduced rate of $75. This reduced rate is non-refundable. Candidates who do not pass the second examination are considered a failed examination. Any repeat examination will require completion of a new application and payment of the full examination fee. There will only be a total of two attempts within the initial 90-day candidacy window determined by the ECRC of the VAD-CB.