

POLICY TITLE: Probation Officer Certification Academy Examination

DATE ADOPTED:

August 25, 2010

DATES REVISED:

November 26, 2012

November 7, 2023

PURPOSE:

The Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA §6-104) establishes a certification process for new probation officers that involves completing the Probation Officer Certification Academy, attaining a minimum standard score of 70% on the certification examination, and receiving a recommendation from the chief probation officer or the director of juvenile court services after completing field requirements and mandatory training within the first year of an officer's tenure.

General Provisions:

1. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is the sole owner of the Probation Officer Certification Academy examination.
2. The AOC will maintain multiple versions of the Probation Officer Certification Academy examination, each consisting of one hundred (100) multiple choice questions selected from a master list of test questions.
3. At least two examination versions will be maintained for adult probation content and two for juvenile probation content.
4. Officers will be seated in the examination room alphabetically by last name.
5. The AOC probation education manager may administer a pre-test of multiple-choice questions from the master list of certification examination questions to compare with the scores on the concluding examination. Individual results of the pre-test are confidential but aggregate data may be used by committees, AOC staff, and consultants to improve and validate the exam.

Examination Day:

1. The examination will be held on the final day of the academy. An officer with a personal emergency that prevents attendance may petition the dean or the AOC probation education manager to reschedule the examination for another date.

2. The petition shall be in writing and provided to the dean or AOC probation education manager prior to the examination date, or as soon as is practical under the circumstances.
3. The examination will begin promptly at the designated time and officers are provided four hours to complete the exam.
4. The AOC probation education manager shall notify the officer's chief or director of tardy attendance. Tardy officers allowed by their chief or director to reschedule the exam must make mutually agreed upon arrangements with the AOC probation education manager.

Permitted Materials:

1. Officers may use only approved materials such as the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration Manual, the Arizona Criminal and Traffic Law Manual, the Sentencing Chart, and the Offender Screening Tool Scoring Guide for reference during the examination.
2. Permitted materials shall be subject to inspection at the discretion of AOC staff, chief probation officers, directors of juvenile court services or examination proctors.
3. Purses and backpacks must be stored away from the officer during the examination. Personal items must be stored in designated areas away from an officer's person.
4. Officers are prohibited from bringing in electronic devices that might disturb others during the examination.

Misconduct:

1. AOC staff have the authority to take necessary action to prevent misconduct within the examination area. Misconduct includes:
 - a. Cheating
 - b. Talking
 - c. Initiating talking
 - d. Sharing information during the examination
 - e. Written material on any body part
 - f. Information written on the permitted materials that does not relate directly to the content of the permitted materials
2. If misconduct is discovered:
 - a. The officer will be asked to leave the examination, and the proctor will notify the probation education manager.
 - b. AOC staff will immediately notify the chief probation officer or the director of juvenile court services, as well as the education services division director of the misconduct.
 - c. AOC staff will prepare a report on the misconduct which will be forwarded to the COPE chairperson, the chief probation officer or the director of juvenile court services, and the education services division director.

3. The written report must be completed and forwarded to the appropriate chief or director within 5 business days of the occurrence.
4. The chief probation officer or the director of juvenile court services has the sole authority to take personnel actions related to the misconduct.

Accommodations:

1. The AOC will provide reasonable accommodations to officers with a disability as described under the American Disabilities Act (ADA).
2. An officer shall request reasonable accommodations prior to the beginning of the Probation Officer Certification Academy.
3. For example, reasonable accommodations may include:
 - a. A separate room
 - b. Verbal presentation of test questions
 - c. Additional time to complete the test
 - d. Special explanations
 - e. Alternative format of test materials

Illness during the examination period:

1. The illness provisions of the Attendance Policy shall be in place during the examination period.
2. An officer shall notify AOC staff of any medical condition which interferes with the officer's ability to complete the examination.
3. The probation education manager shall notify the chief or director of an officer who is ill at the scheduled time of the examination so that the exam can be administered within a reasonable timeframe and when the officer is well.

Grading:

1. The minimum score required to pass the Probation Officer Certification Academy exam is 70%.
2. Scores are reported as Pass or Fail and actual test scores are not reported to officers, chief probation officers, or directors of juvenile court.
3. Computer-scanned answer sheets indicating an initial score below the standard will be hand-scored by two AOC staff.
4. The probation education manager or designee will contact an officer who does not pass the examination within three business days and notify the chief probation officer or director of juvenile court immediately after notifying the officer.

Remediation and re-examination:

1. Officers who do not obtain the required minimum score on the examination are eligible to retake the examination once, if approved by their chief probation officer or the director of juvenile court services.
2. Officers approved by their chief/director to retake the examination shall attend one face-to-face study session with an AOC education specialist. In addition, officers may also prepare for the examination:
 - a. With permission from their chief or director, attend the entire Certification Academy
 - b. With permission from their chief or director, attend specific sections or classes of the Certification Academy
 - c. Another mutually agreed upon arrangement
3. Consistent with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA §6-104 & §1-302), officers must complete and pass the examination within one year from their date of hire.
 - a. AOC staff will make reasonable efforts to administer the examination within a timely manner
 - b. Re-examination may occur in conjunction with the next scheduled certification exam date
 - c. Re-examination shall occur at the Judicial Education Center
 - d. Results of the re-examination are reported as pass or fail

Special Circumstances:

The purpose of this section is to describe the scope of issues that may come before the Review Subcommittee. Only those issues that specifically apply to the certification exam may be forwarded to the Review Committee.

1. Any questions, concerns, or circumstances surrounding the examination process, the examination, or the results of an officer's examination, either initially, or on a retest, must be directed to the AOC probation education manager who will attempt to resolve the issue.
2. If their chief probation officer or director of juvenile court services believes the issue is not resolved, the education services division director will forward the request to the chairperson of COPE, including the issue(s), the response(s), and other relevant information.
3. The request must include the officer's recommendation for specific remedy(ies).
4. The chairperson of COPE will convene an ad-hoc Review Subcommittee as appropriate to the action requested.
5. The decision of the Review Subcommittee is final.

Departmental Responsibilities:

1. A chief probation officer or director of juvenile court services may independently implement personnel actions in addition to any action taken by COPE.

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2. Any personnel action taken independently by a chief probation officer or director of juvenile court services shall not be taken into consideration by the Review Committee.