



The **AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PLANNERS (AICP)** is the American Planning Association's professional institute. Certified planners have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of professional practice and a mastery of theories and tools of planning. To become certified, an APA member must meet requirements for education and experience, pass the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination, pledge to uphold ethical standards (the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct), and engage in ongoing professional development (certification maintenance, or CM). Detailed information can be found at www.planning.org/certification.

Benefits of the AICP: Members of the AICP have an ongoing commitment to excellence, and the AICP demonstrates this to elected officials, community leaders, and employers. AICP members carry a high mark of distinction because they are required to meet rigorous standards, maintain their expertise through continuing education, and serve community interests.

Who is Eligible? APA members who have satisfactorily completed the AICP application proving appropriate levels of education and professional planning experience are eligible to test. Education and experience requirements are as follows:

- Education: Any level of education is acceptable, but influences how many years of experience are required. For example, a planner with no college degree requires 8 years of experience, while a graduate planning degree through a Planning Accreditation Board program requires 2 years of experience.
- Experience: Professional planning experience, whether acquired through practice, teaching, or research, must address all four of the following criteria:
 - Apply a planning process appropriate to the situation
 - Employ an appropriately comprehensive point of view
 - Involve a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness
 - Influence public decision making in the public interest

The Application Process: Testing cycles are currently twice a year, May and November, with tests conducted at Prometic centers nationwide. Specific dates are set by APA. Applications are due months in advance of the testing window, typically January for the May testing window and July for the November test window. The applications must be done online, through the APA website, and are a detailed description of your education and experience, particularly how your specific experience qualifies you to take the exam. APA's Exam Candidate Bulletin is the comprehensive source for information on the application process, and is available on the APA website, www.planning.org.

Preparing for the Exam: Studying for the exam is essential. The national average for passing is typically around 65 percent – meaning that approximately one-third of test takers fail. The PA Chapter has long offered an in-person study session and other resources to its members, and its passing rate is typically around 80 percent – a 15 percent improvement over the national rate that indicates the importance of preparation.

Test Material:

- History, Theory and Law – 15%
- Plan Making and Implementation – 30%
- Functional Areas of Practice – 25%
- Spatial Areas of Practice – 15%
- Public Participation and Social Justice – 10%
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – 5%



Test Background:

- 170 multiple choice questions, including 20 sample questions
- 3 ½ hours to complete (brief tutorial before exam)
- Scoring on a scale, national pass rate is approximately 65%
- Conducted at test centers across the nation

Study Materials:

- PA Chapter website:
 - Prior prep session PowerPoint presentations
 - Ethics presentations and scenarios
 - Professional Development Committee study notes
 - Links to other APA chapter's exam prep information
- PA Chapter:
 - Spring prep session in person, full day
 - Fall prep session by webcast, half day
 - AICP Exam Prep 2.0 for loan to Chapter members
- APA website:
 - Ethics information and PowerPoint presentations
 - Policy Guides
 - Pathways to American Planning History (a timeline of events)
 - Top 25 lists (from the 25th anniversary: Planning Stories, Cases in Planning and Environmental Law, APA Award Winners, Most Significant Planning Laws 1978 – 2003, Individuals Who Influenced Planning Before 1978; locate at <http://myapa.planning.org/25anniversary> or Google)
 - Reading materials list
 - AICP Exam Prep 2.0 and Everyday Ethics for Planners (Barrett) can be purchased
- Other sources:
 - www.planetizen.com for general information and online study course with practice exams
 - www.studystack.com (search AICP)
 - www.census.gov
 - www.oyez.org (for legal clarification)
 - Chapter Presidents Council manual (can be purchased from PA Chapter)

Testing Tips:

- Get plenty of rest for the exam
- Dress in layers
- Eat before the exam
- Arrive early
- Answer every question
- Use the “marking” option
- Think of answer before reviewing choices
- Skim answers before reading long questions
- Do math twice
- Think national

Questions:

If you have questions regarding becoming an AICP, please contact the PA Chapter office at info@planningpa.org, 717-671-4510 or APA at AICPexam@planning.org, 312-431-9100.