

# Application Handbook

To become an IAABC Certified or Accredited member, you must complete an application and submit it to the Application Review Committee. This volunteer committee of qualified professionals will score your work according to a rubric. If you pass, the committee will welcome you to our selected group of animal behavior professionals.

The application has several parts, designed to give us a well-rounded picture of your ability as an animal behavior consultant, trainer, or shelter worker. It asks you to address real-life examples of behavior problems, tests your knowledge of the principles of behavior modification, and requires that you demonstrate good working relationships with other professionals.

The IAABC offers multiple levels of assessment. By doing so, we honor the hard work and dedication our members devote to excellence in the field, while still delineating between levels of experience and expertise.

You do not need to be certified to join the IAABC. We offer the Supporting membership to welcome all professionals, regardless of where they are in their education and experience, without any exam required.

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## **Certifications:**

- Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (CDBC)
- Associate Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (ACDBC)
  
- Certified Cat Behavior Consultant (CCBC)
- Associate Certified Cat Behavior Consultant (ACCBC)
  
- Certified Parrot Behavior Consultant (CPBC)
- Associate Certified Parrot Behavior Consultant (ACPBC)
  
- Certified Horse Behavior Consultant (CHBC)
- Associate Certified Horse Behavior Consultant (ACHBC)
  
- Certified Animal Behavior Consultant, fully certified in 3 or more species (CABC)
  
- Certified in Shelter Behavior
  - Certified in Shelter Behavior - Dog (CSB-D)
  - Certified in Shelter Behavior - Cat (CSB-C)
  - Certified in Shelter Behavior - Horse (CSB-H)
  - Certified in Shelter Behavior - Parrot (CSB-P) (Pending)
  - Certified in Shelter Behavior - Small Animals (CSB-SA) (Pending)
  - Certified Shelter Behavior Specialist, certified in more than one shelter specialty - (CSBS)

## **Accreditations:**

- Shelter Behavior Affiliate (SBA)

- Entrenador Canino Acreditado (IAABC - ECA) Available in Spanish only.

## Requirements

The IAABC does not require a specific number of hours of past experience or logging of previous work. The application is thorough, comprehensive, and assesses not just what you know, but how you apply what you know. This is not the type of exam you can wing by looking things up or asking a friend. Each application is put through our plagiarism checkers to ensure original answers from all applicants.

We suggest a minimum number of hours of experience to give our applicants the best chance of success. Considerable experience and a deep tool box are necessary to be successful.

- Certified:
  - We suggest four years and 500 hours experience in animal behavior consulting
  - 400 hours minimum of coursework, seminars and mentorships
- Associate Certified
  - We suggest three years and 300 hours experience in animal behavior consulting
  - 150 hours minimum of coursework, seminars and mentorships
- Shelter Behavior Affiliate
  - We suggest 200 hours experience in animal behavior work
  - A working knowledge of learning science, training, and husbandry, with additional knowledge of animal management skills related to shelter work.
- Entrenador Canino Acreditado
  - We suggest at least 2 years experience dog training
  - A working knowledge of learning science, training, and husbandry, and some seminar, mentorship, and other additional education.
- All applicants must have a minimum high school diploma, GED or equivalent.
  
- Board Certified Veterinary Behaviorists (US DACVB) who are currently practicing in animal behavior consulting with clients will be granted full Certified status with submission of membership dues and application fee.
- Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourists (UK CCABs) accredited by the ASAB who are currently practicing in animal behavior consulting with clients will be granted full Certified status with submission of membership dues and application fee.

## Aggression and Types of Cases

- Full certification applicants must be comfortable working all manner of major behavior cases.

- Case studies are level-appropriate. Only Certified level applicants are evaluated on aggression cases directed at humans.
- “Aggression” is defined as behavior resulting in injury to people or other animals.
- You may not become certified by presenting only one type of behavior case. An ongoing, varied caseload is expected and necessary to achieve certification.

## **Case Studies**

We request specific case studies depending on the application, and topic requirements are randomized from application to application.

- The Certified application contains three case study prompts and four scenarios, as well as questions about learning science and behavior consulting methods.
- The Associate Certified application contains two case study prompts, one scenario, and questions about learning science and behavior consulting methods.

## **LIMA and Positive Reinforcement**

While the IAABC does not require pledges or promises, we are a positive reinforcement-based organization.

“LIMA” is an acronym for the phrase “least intrusive, minimally aversive.” LIMA describes a plan that uses the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy from a set of humane tactics likely to succeed in achieving a training or behavior change objective. LIMA adherence also requires consultants to be adequately educated and skilled to ensure that the least intrusive and aversive procedure is used.

LIMA does not justify the use of punishment in lieu of other effective interventions and strategies. Applicants are expected to focus on the animal's environment, physical well-being, and operant and classical interventions such as differential reinforcement of an alternative behavior, desensitization, and counter-conditioning.

IAABC applicants are expected at all times to focus on LIMA strategies and positive reinforcement solutions to behavior challenges. Applicants who respond with punishment-based intervention strategies are assumed to be inadequately experienced to be awarded certification.

## **Scoring**

- All applications are anonymous. Reviewers do not know whose application they're scoring.
- Reviewers score without knowledge of other evaluators' scores.

- Reviewers score using a rubric containing a list of aspects and answers expected to be covered in some way by the applicant.
- Reviewers leave notes within each independent rubric to inform the Chair of questions raised by an application. The Chair then reviews all scores to ensure reviewer accuracy, before submitting the findings to the applicant. Applicants do not see the rubric, the scoring procedure, or the notes.
- Applicants must receive a score of 80% or higher in each section of the application to pass.
  - For Certified and Associate Certified:
    - Learning science
    - Case studies
    - Scenarios
    - Entire application
  - For Accreditations:
    - Learning science
    - Scenarios
    - Training questions
    - Entire application
- Applicants who score between 70% and 79% will be welcomed as a member at the level before the one applied for in that division.
- Applicants who score below 70% remain valuable Supporting members, and are welcome to retake the exam six months or more after receiving their notice.

## Applicant Assistance

- If you are having difficulty with your IAABC account, or filling out the application for some reason, write to [info@iaabc.org](mailto:info@iaabc.org).
- ***Always save your work in another location.*** While we have redundancy systems in place to ensure all work is saved and protected, never fill out your application without also having a full copy of your answers in another location.
- We cannot answer individual application content questions. This guide and the instructions on the application are all you have to work from. We will not answer, “Is this what you’re looking for,” or other questions having to do with your individual responses, or questions, beyond technical issues.
- ***Always save your work in another location. Yes, we are saying this twice.***

## **How long Do I Have to Fill Out the Application?**

You have 60 days from time your last letter of reference is received. We understand letters of reference can take longer than any of us would like. The 60-day clock on your application doesn't start until your last letter of reference has been received.

## **The Application Process**

IAABC applications require demonstrated knowledge of scientific principles, their application, critical thinking, and in most cases, require the presentation of case studies.

## **Application Fee and Dues**

- If you are new to the IAABC, you pay an initial join fee. You are now a Supporting Member, in good standing for 1 year.
- If you wish to apply for a certification or accreditation, IAABC members of any level may do so at any time.
- Members pay the fee associated with the application they're applying for.
- Once accepted, you pay that membership level's dues, starting 1 year after acceptance to the new level.
- Dues are specific to each level of membership.
- If you are not accepted at the desired level, you'll be accepted at the next appropriate level, according to your score.

## **Agreement to Standards**

Before moving forward with an application, you'll be required to read and agree to:

- The IAABC Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice
- The LIMA guidelines
- IAABC Member Guidelines

## **Letters of Reference**

We require three letters of reference before you begin an application. These forms are sent by us as part of the application process via email to each individual providing the reference.

Reference requests include a brief attestation of familiarity with you and your work.

- Species Certified and Associate Certified
  - One reference each from a colleague, a veterinarian (for Certified this should be a veterinarian you work with), and a client.
- Shelter Certified and Affiliate
  - One reference from a shelter manager, board member or supervisor.
  - Two references from coworkers familiar with your work.
- Entrenador Canino Acreditado

- Dos referencias de clientes.
- Una referencias de un colega.
- Applicants are notified via email when all of their letters of reference have been received.

We make the reference process as convenient as possible by having our application system send the request to your listed contacts. The email simply reads:

Hello,

You are being contacted as a [client / colleague] of [applicant's name and email], an IAABC applicant.

Please take a moment to complete the brief, secure endorsement form at this link: [we include a link that takes them to a form].

We take our standards of eligibility very seriously. Applicants do not see letters of reference. For more information about our organization and our standards of practice, please refer to [this page](#).

Thank you for your time.

## **What does a Scenario look like, and how is it scored?**

Scenarios are sample cases with more than one possible approach to resolution. Scenarios assess applicants on their problem solving and critical thinking skills. To achieve a passing score, you'll need show awareness of best practices.

Scenarios do not have one answer or theory to follow. Often, there could be several reasons for a situation or particular behaviors. Scenarios contain specific details to which an applicant must respond in order to receive a passing score.

You may be asked to provide recommendations for safety and management based on your assessment of the issue. You may include your behavior modification strategies, and other problem-solving tactics, but there is no feedback possible from the client. We want to know what you might ask, given only the information provided.

In the example scenario below, a successful answer will include basic content that someone wanting to be "certified in car mechanics" would need to know, and be able to explain clearly. A Scenario for a car mechanic's application might be:

John calls your auto repair shop for help. He tells you that his Lamborghini Veneno Roadster isn't "acting right." He tells you that, since the weather turned cooler, he's been sitting in the garage with the car running to make sure the car doesn't lose its performance capabilities from lack of use. He mentions that he closes the garage door to help keep the car as warm as possible. John complains that since he's been doing this, he's smelling a strong gasoline odor that's making him feel sick while the car idles.

John says that he's been letting his car run every day like clockwork, but yesterday the car wouldn't start at all, even though he kept trying. John's been leaving the car's wing door up to easily get in and out, but when he decided to close the door today it felt very heavy and was hard to move. He decided to leave it open until he'd had a chance to call you.

- What questions might you ask John?
- How might you assess what's going on with the car?
- What immediate suggestions might you make to tide him over until you could see the car?
- What aspect of this case do you think is especially important to note?

#### APPLICANT RESPONSE

The first thing I'd do is tell John to stop idling or in any way running the car when in his garage with the garage door closed.

I'd ask John what his gas level was in the car. That he's been sitting in it, letting it idle for days on end, suggests that he may be low on or out of gas, contributing to his starting issues.

I'd also make sure that he was putting the key in the ignition correctly. Lamborghini keys, though multi-directional, sometimes fit better in one direction than another. Further, the trim near the ignition could scratch from the alternative position.

I'd have him check the battery. The car "not starting at all," combined with the "heavy door" (because the doors rotate vertically at a fixed hinge at the front, the doors require battery assist to open and close easily), leads me to think that the battery is dead.

Especially important to note here is that John is smelling gas and idling in the garage. While that's a concern in any situation, Lamborghini Venenos have a defective evaporative-emission system that can let gasoline soak through its charcoal filter and into the purge valves. If this happens, excess fuel vapors can come into contact with hot exhaust gas and ignite. Lamborghini has stated that "particular maneuvers, for instance an engine over revving at idle" can exacerbate the problem, causing a fire.

I'd explain the known dangers to the client, and strongly urge them to immediately stop idling the car, even if they get it to start again, and especially in the garage, and to only run the car outside with good ventilation.

The reviewers have a list of aspects and answers the applicant should cover. Reviewers cannot see each other's scores. The reviewers score using a rubric, and leave notes to explain the marking down of a question or to note something else.

The Chair then reviews all scores to ensure each scorer responded appropriately and without error. Next, the Chair sends the final score to the applicant. Below is an example of the rubric. Applicants do not see the rubric, the scores or the scorer notes.

## Answer Rubric for Scorers

On a scale of 0 (incorrect) to 3 (perfectly accurate), please select	Bonnie	Clyde
Did the applicant ask questions to assess what might be going on?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Did the questions cover issues likely to be important to the case?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Did the applicant offer immediate suggestions that might be helpful?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Did the applicant address not starting the car while in the garage?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Did the applicant "address an important aspect" of the case?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Was that aspect in fact important to the case?	0 1 2 <b>3</b>	0 1 2 <b>3</b>
Score (total score possible 18)	18	16
Scorer's Notes Clyde: The applicant never suggested having the alternator checked.  Bonnie: Great work from the applicant making clear the danger of idling in the garage with the door closed.		

## Case Studies

Case studies are also scored against a rubric, ensuring that pivotal questions and best practices are addressed by the applicant.

[See our example case study here.](#)

## **When will I learn whether my application was accepted?**

Our application turnaround time is about two weeks. Once the reviewers have finished scoring, the Chair will send the determination letter to the applicant via email.

- If you have passed your desired level, you'll be informed and congratulated!
- If you have not passed, but scored between 70% and 79% on your application, you'll be welcomed as a member at the lower level in that division. Included in the email sent to you will be personalized notes addressing areas in which you did well, and areas in which you needed support to successfully complete the application at the desired level.
- If your scores were below 70%, you'll remain a Supporting member, and are welcome to retake the exam six months or more after receiving your notice. All member benefits associated with Supporting membership remain in place, and your membership is uninterrupted. Included in the email sent to you will be personalized notes addressing areas in which you did well, and areas in which you needed support to successfully complete the application.

## **What happens after I'm accepted?**

We celebrate!

- You'll receive an automated email, sent the day your application is accepted.
- You'll then receive a first certificate from us - this is a big deal!
- Your certificate and an IAABC ID card are also downloadable from within your IAABC account.
- Your IAABC account are also now have level-specific logos for your use on website, business cards, printed and other materials.
- If you're Certified or Associate Certified, you'll be able to go into your IAABC account and create your listing for display on our Consultant Locator.
  - Be sure to select "yes" on the "Make listing public?" button.
  - Be sure to select "yes" if you also do phone and virtual consulting.
- Your member benefits will now include more benefits, including unlimited access to our video library of free conference (and other) presentations, for CEU.
- You will need to log 36 Continuing Education Units every 3 years.

## **Continuing Education**

IAABC Certified and Accredited members are expected to maintain current, ongoing education.

- A total of 36 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) must be accrued every 3 years in order to maintain certification.
- You can learn more about our continuing education policy [here](#)
- Education must be based on our Core Competencies.
- The IAABC does not award CEUs for education in the use of tools and techniques advocating the use of punishment or aversives. Examples include, but are not limited to: prong collars, cattle prods, verbal/physical abuse, electronic collars, whips, etc.

## **I've got questions! FAQ**

Because the IAABC Application is unique in asking not only what you know, but how you *apply* what you know, our application requires more thought than simple right or wrong answers. We love thinkers! While we've done our best to make the application instructions clear, some people do have additional questions.

### **Can I Ask for Help?**

- You're free to write to [info@iaabc.org](mailto:info@iaabc.org) with questions, but we cannot answer questions like:
  - "Is this what you have in mind?"
    - Sent with an excerpt from your answer.
  - "I don't understand what you want here."
    - Any response from info@ will match the information included in this handbook.
  - "I don't work this kind of case. Can I substitute another case?"
    - No. We ask that you respond to the questions given and case studies requested.

### **Can I Save and Come Back Later?**

- Yes. We have an autosave feature on our applications.
  - That said, we are not responsible for lost work, and we can't explore various reasons on the applicant's end if work seems to have disappeared.
  - SAVE YOUR WORK ON A BACKUP. Write your answers in Word or Google Docs or whatever you like, and then paste them into the application so that you always have a backup copy.

### **Can I Get More Time?**

- Applicants have 60 days to complete their application. The 60-day clock starts after your last letter of reference has been received by us.
  - In cases of significant injury, hospitalization or similar circumstances beyond your control, we do grant extra time in rare cases. You may write to [info@iaabc.org](mailto:info@iaabc.org) to request assistance.

- We do not grant extra time because life got busy.
- The 60-day clock also allows ample time for differently-abled learners. No additional time is given, as we've more than doubled the expected necessary time for completion of the application.

## **I Only Work in One Area of Specialty. Can I Apply and Submit My Own Case Studies?**

- Some applicants only work on specific types of behavior cases, say separation issues or aggression.
  - No. We expect IAABC Certified and Accredited trainers to have well-rounded abilities and assessment skills.
  - The case studies you'll be asked to complete are assigned.
  - The case study topic requirements are randomized.
  - The case studies are level-appropriate. We do not evaluate cases involving injury to humans for any level but Certified.

## **I Work with More Than One Species. How Do I Get Certified in Multiple Species?**

- You're welcome to be certified in as many divisions as you like.
- Each application is treated individually, same process for each one.
- If completed within a year of original certification, existing letters of reference can be used for the new application.
- If more than a year old, we require new endorsements.
- Members qualified in 2 species list their certifications individually, so CDBC, CCBC, for instance, is certified in Dog and Cat.
- Members qualified in 3 or more species are certified as Certified Animal Behavior Consultants, CABC.
- Members pay one dues fee per year, regardless of how many certifications and accreditations they hold with the IAABC.
- The total required number of CEUs remains at 36, and counts across all your certifications.

## **Can I Appeal the Decision About My Application?**

- We do not have an appeals process.
  - Because our applications are scored anonymously, and by more than one reviewer, we do not have an appeals process for applicants unhappy with their scores. Applicants not attaining their desired level are sent a detailed letter outlining areas in which they excelled, and areas in which they needed support.

- Members are invited to re-apply in 6 months, or at any time in the future.
- All application fees and steps are required.

### **What are the IAABC's Positions?**

- The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, disability, physical limitation, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs or any other characteristic prohibited by law.
- IAABC members work to minimize the use of aversive stimuli and maximize the effective use of reinforcers to modify animal behavior. Members agree to adhere to the LIMA (least intrusive, minimally aversive) and the IAABC Code of Ethics principle upon joining. Within that framework, the IAABC welcomes diversity and openness. Positive regard, and respect for differences are among our core value, always striving toward solid, effective, positive reinforcement-based work.
- The IAABC's position statements can be found [here](#).