

# AICP STUDY GUIDE

---

## Episode 16: The Application Process (REMIX!)

---

And welcome back to the sixteenth Episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. To be exact, we're making this "Episode 1." I just decided since it's a new round of the AICP exam, we should make this a new - you know - "season."

Anyways, I'm Jonathan Miller and thank you so much for joining us again or for the first time - whichever. And, we will kick off the return with a little recap of some of the changes that the APA rolled out for the AICP exam process because - you know - leaving it the same and maintaining expectations would be far too simple.

I hope all of your holidays went well and you got some of the much needed R & R, and just generally unplugging. Because like it or not, reality is back in a big way; but I'm not touching that shit with a 10-foot pole.

Regardless, let's get started with some of these changes and how they may affect you. Spoiler alert, the main change was removing the criteria questions from the application and instead, bifurcating the process into planning experience essays and the exam. Let's look at it more holistically though.

**(1:24)**

Now, if you knew what the time tables were like in the previous format, you may be confused. It's January 19th and I'm just now bringing up the exam. That's because I needed some time off, but when you hear the new time tables and deadlines you'll maybe be even more confused.

First off, the new time table opened the application process on January 5th, and from there it's all over the place depending on how you'll be navigating the process. If you plan on submitting your experience essays, you're too late. That was on January 19th. But, and it's a big but - Sir Mix-a-lot big - you can still submit an application for the exam and then submit the essays later. In that case, you have until April 2nd to get your application in.

The truly good news here is that once your application is approved, you don't ever have to do it again. If you don't pass the exam, or your essays aren't accepted, or you want to submit your essays later, you can redo them in the next round without having to resubmit the application. Now, after you get your initial application in, you now need to contend with the deadlines for each of the components: the essays and the exam.

If you submitted your application in time for the essays this time around, you can submit those for expedited review between February 9th and February 16th. The regular window opens on February 16th and ends on the 23rd; apparently you can't submit early and not expedited, but whatever. As far as the exam, that window is wide open. That registration window opens up on the 19th and runs through April 30th, so you have plenty of time there.

And just thinking ahead, your exam window is going to be May 1st through the 25th, so you might as well register early so you can be sure to get the time slot that works best for you.

## (3:42)

As far as the eligibility requirements are concerned, there weren't really any significant changes. The experience requirements are the same - listed in years - and still relate to F.T.E. or full-time equivalent years. Just to recap for you, if your eligibility requirement is 3 years, that means 40 hours a week for 52 weeks, for 3 years; or 6,240 hours.

So just like before - starting with the most minimal education - a High School Diploma and no college - you aren't going to be eligible to take the exam until you've been in the work force for at least 8 full years; 16,640 hours.

IF you have a bachelor's degree in something that's not planning, you're going to have to accumulate at least 4 full years of experience. If you do have a degree in planning, but the school you graduated from is not accredited by the APA Planning Accreditation Board: that is also 4 years. It doesn't matter if it's a bachelor's, master's, or doctorates, if it isn't accredited, it's 4 years of full-time experience for you, no matter what.

If your program is accredited, a bachelor's degree will come with 3 years of full-time experience. And if it's a master's or better, it's only two years of full-time experience. And just like before, the status of accreditation does matter, so pay attention if you're on the fringe.

Let's say your institution was going through the accreditation process when you were in school. You'll follow the experience time frames of an accredited school as long as the institution was accredited at the time your degree was conferred, and the institution is still accredited when you apply. You do still need to submit verification of your education, but these requirements relaxed a little bit.

## (5:53)

To verify your education, you'll need either:

1. A transcript. It doesn't need to be ordered separately and sent directly. You can just scan in an official transcript and submit the PDF, but it does need to have the date that the degree was conferred; or
2. You can submit a photocopy of your diploma - and bonus - this does not need to be notarized anymore; or
3. A letter from the university confirming you did get your degree on official letterhead with the writer's contact information and title.

Go ahead and get that ready ahead of time because some universities may take forever to get it to you, and you definitely don't want that to be the hold up. So, now that you know how many years of experience you need based on your education, and you've got your documents verifying your education, the next logical question then is: "What exactly counts as experience?"

## (6:53)

Well, previously, the APA essentially said it qualifies if it meets the APA's criteria of professional planning experience. While that was amazingly unhelpful, it's even more unhelpful now since they shifted the essays which demonstrate that professional planning experience to away from the application. That said, I imagine it hasn't changed much, so to recap that one again for you, it went like this.

The APA used three criteria to decide if your experience is professional planning experience - and spoiler alert again - these will be the three experience essay questions; but we will touch on these later on. And those are.

1. Demonstrating a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process;
2. Evaluating multiple impacts to a community when implementing professional planning tasks; and
3. Influencing public decision making in the public interest.

IF you work for a government entity of some kind or do consulting work for one, it's pretty clear cut; you're good. As far as the capacity within which you work, internships can count, but you need to note what tasks you were performing at your internship.

As much as I personally disagree with the concept, a lot of internships just have you do menial bullshit and depending on how much menial bullshit we're talking about, that actually may make your experience not qualify. Experience also won't qualify if it was part of an educational requirement. So if your internship was a requirement to graduate, it won't count. Special project for a class? Nope.

That said, most internships aren't full-time anyways, but part-time experience still counts; pro-rated to a full-time equivalent of course. So for example, if you worked part-time at - say - 20 hours a week for 6 months, that equates to 3 months of full-time experience. And the experience requirement is for full-time, so it's important to prorate that work out.

**(9:21)**

It's important to note that they'll only count experience if it qualifies as professional planning experience. And the important thing here is to look at your experience as a sum of the parts. Now previously, you had to submit letters of verification from your employer, but the APA has apparently become very trusting and no longer requires that.

So what do they need you to submit? Just your employment information and brief summary of your on-the-job responsibilities. And that's it, application complete.

So, how much is this going to cost you.

**(10:04)**

The application fee - which apparently now just consists of your information since the essays were moved to a separate section - will cost you \$70. That is, \$70 will buy you the ability to register for the exam and submit essays. However, each of those will cost you as well. The Planning Experience Essay Fee - as they call it - will run you \$220. That's for the regular essay submission though. The expedited submission fee? Well that will run you a cool \$290. While the exam itself will cost another \$220.

So all-in? \$70 for the application, \$220 for the essay and exam each, and if you want the expedited review so you can correct it if it's returned; well that privilege will run \$290 instead of \$220. Basically, you're looking at \$510 minimum or an extra \$70 (that's \$580) for the privilege of correcting errors.

Oh, and don't forget the additional \$100 if you want to appeal the decision on your essay. Man, it is expensive to try and further your career in public service. Interesting.

**(11:31)**

That's about it for the changes.

Just to recap, the application doesn't require employment certification letters anymore and no essays are involved with the initial application. Instead, the essay portion of the application is now a separate component of certification that can either be done before or after the exam. Just as long as both are completed, you'll be certified.

Of course, this comes along with a restructuring of fees. While the process initially cost \$70 for the application and \$425 for the exam (that's a total of 495 bucks), the new structure has the same \$70 application fee; and \$220 for each of the experience essays and exam for a new total of \$510 with an option to apply for expedited essay reviews. But that option is an extra \$70 bucks.

Now I know we didn't touch on the experience essay portion of the certification process, but now that it's an entirely separate part of the certification process - as opposed to being rolled into the application - I thought it might be a good idea to devote an entire episode to just the essays.

So make sure you stay tuned in.

**(13:01)**

Well, thanks again for joining us! I know all of this is a lot, but breathe. I promise it's easier than you think.

All of the links for the references we talked about here can be found in the show notes, including links to the AICP Guide to the Certification Application, which I definitely recommend looking over. For comparison, you can view the old AICP Guide Part 1 on the website. Some of that information will still be useful as well.

If you have any questions that you want to follow-up on, feel free to reach out to me at [theeveryunofficialAICPstudyguide@gmail.com](mailto:theeveryunofficialAICPstudyguide@gmail.com), and I'll do my best to help out if I can. Otherwise you can always reach out to your local APA chapter and I'm sure they'd be happy to help.

Also, we all love a little self-promotion, so please don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts, and sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And, if you really love me, go ahead and share this out with any planners you know who might be interested or leave a review - a good one of course - wink wink.

Make sure you tune in next week. Shane and Alex, the wonderful people behind Planning Certification, will help talk about those experience essays, the topics, and some do's and don'ts.

Well, Welcome to the - air quotes here - second season of the VERY Unofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

**Links:**

Eligibility Criteria:

<https://planning.org/certification/eligible/>

AICP Guide Certification Application:

<https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/document/aicp-guide-certification-application.pdf>