

ABVO BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION TO COMMENT REGARDING TARGET MATERIAL FOR  
CANDIDATES TAKING THE ABVO CERTIFYING EXAMINATION  
**IN-DEPTH EXPLANATION**

***The goals of redefining target material in the current literature are (1) to target material that is critical, important and relevant and (2) to protect against the loss of material that is critical, important and relevant.***

The Multiple Choice (MC) part of the ABVO certifying examination is designed to assess knowledge of the current literature that is critical, important and relevant for veterinary ophthalmologists. To support ABVO residents and mentors in learning this information, the ABVO Board and Exam Committee have been working together over the past couple of years to target critical, important and relevant material in the current literature. This proposal for identifying this target material is being presented for your consideration and input. Background information and links to relevant material are included throughout the proposal to assist in considering it. This information is inset with bullet points to facilitate reading the proposal without the background information, if desired. **Please review the proposal and provide any comments, feedback or suggestions in the survey link provided. Feedback will be harvested for 3 months from the date the survey link is provided. After stakeholder feedback is considered, the ABVO Board will make a recommendation to accept this proposal, revise this proposal, or return this proposal for further consideration without implementation.**

**Currently, there is no process in place to identify content that is critical, important and relevant for the Multiple Choice (written) portion of the ABVO Certification Examination.** A broad and nonspecific criterion is used to identify target material for the Multiple Choice portion of the ABVO Certification Examination.

- Questions may come from a 7-year publication window of pertinent articles from 8 required journals, along with a list of 13 required textbooks and 4 required atlases.
- Questions may also come from a 7-year publication window of pertinent articles in an additional 17 human, veterinary and basic science ophthalmology journals.
- For a more detailed description of all parts of the ABVO exam, please see the ABVO website at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb9742dd2ae880e0ffa1abe/t/655cd3eddd14bd2d12f35954/1700582381233/Nature+and+Scope+of+the+Examination+2024+FINAL.pdf>, or the ABVO Policies & Procedures document at [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb9742dd2ae880e0ffa1abe/t/65416b2a123adc5de0f452d8/1698786091275/ABVO\\_PP\\_CURRENT+%2810.17.2023%29.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb9742dd2ae880e0ffa1abe/t/65416b2a123adc5de0f452d8/1698786091275/ABVO_PP_CURRENT+%2810.17.2023%29.pdf).

In addition to material found in relevant textbooks and atlases, a broad and nonspecific criterion is used to identify target material for the Multiple Choice (written) part of the exam: a 7-year window in which a journal article must have been published from a required list of 8 veterinary journals and 17 recommended human, veterinary and basic science journals. There is no mechanism to identify content that is critical, important and relevant within this 7-year window; to identify such content that is not found in currently required or recommended material; or to retain such content that is lost after this 7-year window has expired. The only criterion has been the 7-year publication window for journals on the

required and recommended lists. This results in no consistency in the method used by residents and mentors to determine which articles to target.

- For the 2024 ABVO Resident Reading List, please see the ABVO website at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb9742dd2ae880e0ffa1abe/t/6524427d5f9a6926c56fda78/1696875134125/ABVO+Resident+Reading+List+2024+Exam.pdf>. This list is updated yearly.
- Specifically, residents are responsible for knowing the pertinent published literature in *American Journal of Veterinary Research*, *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, *Equine Veterinary Journal*, *Journal of Small Animal Practice*, *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association*, *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* and *Veterinary Ophthalmology*.
- Additionally, MC questions may also be taken from pertinent articles that appear in the journals *Archives of Ophthalmology*, *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, *BMC Veterinary Research*, *Current Eye Research*, *Equine Veterinary Education*, *Experimental Eye Research*, *Graefe's Archives for Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology*, *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science*, *Journal of Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*, *Journal of Zoological and Wildlife Medicine*, *PLOS ONE*, *Translational Visual Science and Technology*, *Veterinary Immunology and Immunopathology*, *Veterinary Pathology*, *Veterinary Record* and *Veterinary Surgery*.

**Two challenges have arisen over time with this criterion.** The first challenge is that critical, important and relevant content may be published *outside* this 7-year window and not found in any required or recommended textbook. Second, information that is critical, important and relevant may be found in journals *outside* those on the specified list of required or recommended journals. Authors have an increasing number of choices for publishing veterinary ophthalmology content. Therefore, identifying critical, important and relevant articles published *outside* the list of required or recommended journals in the reading list becomes increasingly crucial in our goal to protect the pet-owning public.

***To summarize, the goals of redefining target material in the current literature are (1) to target material that is critical, important and relevant and (2) to protect against the loss of material that is critical, important and relevant.***

***Two mechanisms have been proposed to accomplish these goals: the creation of a Key Articles list and to consider a change in the current 7-year publication window.*** The Key Articles list would be reminiscent of the Classic Articles list (last required in 2013) that is given on the ABVO website Reading List but is no longer required as target material for the MC part of the exam.

Under this proposal, questions may come from a **Key Articles list**, which would include articles published outside any publication window or any required or recommended materials list, but are considered critical, important and relevant for a veterinary ophthalmologist to know. In addition, this **Key Articles list** allows the retention of content that is critical, important and relevant that does not become part of

a required or recommended textbook, is lost after the publication window has expired or was never part of any required or recommended reading list. The **Key Articles list** would be updated annually in time for each new examination cycle.

Under this proposal, the current 7-year **publication window** for required journals on the *ABVO Resident Reading List* could remain at 7 years or could be reduced from a 7-year window to a 5-year window. Adding a Key Articles list to the current 7-year publication window may increase the amount of target material. If that is a concern, to avoid increasing the amount of material, then a reduction in the length of the publication window may be something to consider.

**Precedent from other specialty colleges:** Acknowledging that the ABVO must follow our primary mission as well as do what is right for our specialty, there is precedent for combining a publication window with a key articles list. Other ABVS specialty colleges have adopted a similar approach.

- ACVS uses a 5-year window for some journals and a 3-year window for others, supplemented by an unofficial “landmark articles” list.
- ACVECCS uses a 3-year window for current literature, similarly supplemented by a list of important articles which is more formally made available to exam candidates.
- ACVIM does not currently put forward a list of important articles but uses a 5-year window for targeted journals.

**To minimize disruption to residents and mentors, the ABVO would announce any new proposal, and release the Key Articles list, at least one year before the exam for which it takes effect.** Additionally, if the current publication window is reduced from 7-years to 5-years, the initial Key Articles list would predominantly contain articles published in the two years that would be dropped from the current 7-year publication window. This would ensure that the Key Articles list contains material for which exam candidates would have been already studying and would have been responsible for prior to any change due to the implementation of any proposed policy. Finally, the Key Articles list would change by no more than 15%, which is approximately the same change in the number of articles using a 7-year window criterion when moving from one year to the next (i.e., when the oldest year drops off and a new year is added on to the window). For example, if this proposal were to be put in place for the 2025 Exam, the Key Articles list would predominantly contain articles published in the years 2018-2021, which is material which 2025 exam candidates would already be studying.

- There is currently a subcommittee of the Exam Committee working on identifying a Key Articles list comprising journal articles relating to anatomic structures of the eye in line with the topics tested in the MC part of the exam, as identified by the ABVO’s most recent Job Task Analysis (JTA). These topics are listed in the Exam Blueprint, which was derived from the most recent JTA. The Blueprint can be found on the ABVO website at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb9742dd2ae880e0ffa1abe/t/5ffc8f83abc9bd29e770d300/1610387332139/ACVO+blueprint+2020.pdf>.
- The topics include adnexa, cornea, uvea, lens, glaucoma and posterior segment.

- The volunteers constructing a draft of the Key Articles list comprises members from academia and private practice, all of whom are actively engaged in training residents, and most of whom have served on ABVO Credentials, Residency or Examination Committees. The intention is to have Subcommittee membership serve for three years each, as Exam Committee members do, and rotate so that 1/3 of the members are replaced each year.
- Suggestions for articles to include on the Key Articles list are welcome from any ABVO Diplomates.

Please note that these proposed changes would not impact the Image Recognition (IR) part of the ABVO Certifying Examination. Also, even with the proposed changes, material for the MC part of the exam may still come from the most recent edition of textbooks, as listed on the “Resource Material for ABVO Residents” document.

**If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me ([rhamor@acvo.org](mailto:rhamor@acvo.org)).**

**Ralph Hamor, ABVO Board Chair**