# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP AP³ Participant Process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP AP³ Requirements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Core (CME) Requirement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Assessments</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Assessment(s)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP Application Information</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application and Eligibility</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants With a Disability</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Processing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appellate Rights</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals Process</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Administration Requirements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverse Action Notification Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Health Information</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term of Advanced Practical Pathology Certificate of Recognition</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Completion Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Maintenance Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and Renewal Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate Maintenance and Renewal Period</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification of Maintenance and Renewal Deadline</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Maintenance and Renewal Materials</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Maintenance and Renewal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to Meet Maintenance and Renewal Requirements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentention of Maintenance and Renewal Materials</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding Multiple AP³ Certificates of Recognition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misrepresentation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release of Information</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Warranty</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts of Interest</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Changes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP Property Rights</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help and Support Information</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Overview

This handbook will assist you with your questions about the CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Programs (AP³s), including eligibility, requirements, and the overall registration and completion processes.
Program Purpose

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) is the leading organization of board-certified pathologists, serving patients, pathologists, and the public by fostering and advocating excellence in the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine. Consistent with its vision, the College has launched CAP AP³s for several reasons:

- The College recognizes a number of exciting new roles that pathologists are beginning to fill, such as performing ultrasound-guided fine-needle aspirations. The CAP AP³s provide interested pathologists with a route to acquire the knowledge and skill to assume new roles.

- While the College recognizes the tremendous learning opportunity afforded by fellowship training, many practicing pathologists and fellowship directors do not believe that completion of a fellowship should signify expertise for an entire practice lifetime. The CAP AP³s ensure that recipients of AP³ Certificates of Recognition keep their knowledge and skills current.

- In some regions of the country, self-declared specialists compete for business with general pathologists. Many pathologists are concerned that some of these self-declared experts have unproven expertise. CAP AP³s allow pathologists to assert their expertise by meeting objective criteria.

- Other specialty organizations have created advanced programs to promote their own educational programs or products. Many pathologists believe it is important to offer a program that measures knowledge and skill.

- Some patient advocacy groups have advised patients to always have their biopsies interpreted at large medical centers. Practicing pathologists know that expertise is found in a variety of practice settings large and small. To support these needs, the CAP continues to develop CAP AP³s that are applicable to various practice settings.

- This program will provide participants with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate practical knowledge and skills in areas not currently addressed by the American Board of Pathology (ABP).

The purpose of this handbook is to guide participants through the process of obtaining a CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition.

Participation in these CAP educational programs is voluntary and open to everyone who meets the qualification requirements. Membership in the CAP is not required.

For further information regarding CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Programs, visit http://cap.org and click on CAP Learning Portal > Advanced Practical Pathology Programs; or email your questions to ap3@cap.org, or call 800-323-4040 option 1.
Program Development

Volunteer content experts from within and outside of the College are currently working to develop and implement several CAP AP³s. All of the content experts have significant experience in a program’s field and are noted for their contributions in academia, research, professional communities, and patient-care arenas.

CAP AP³ Participant Process

The process for completing a CAP AP³ consists of four basic steps:

1. Complete a registration form and remit payment. (To obtain a form: log in to cap.org, click on the Learning Portal tab, and then select the AP³ link; contact the CAP at ap3@cap.org; or call 800-323-4040 option 1.)

2. Complete the core curriculum CME requirements for your CAP AP³. Descriptions and details about the CME are provided in the individual CAP AP³ manual at http://cap.org. > CAP Learning Portal > Advanced Practical Pathology Programs.

3. Successfully complete program-specific cognitive and practical assessments. Details about the assessments are provided in the individual CAP AP³ manual. To view, log in to cap.org. > CAP Learning Portal > Advanced Practical Pathology Programs.

4. The CAP will notify you within two months of completing the CME and assessments if you have met all the requirements for successful completion of the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition. You will receive your certificate four to six weeks after notification.
CAP AP³ Requirements

To receive a CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Program Certificate of Recognition, applicants need to meet four requirements. Participants must:

- Possess board certification in anatomic and/or clinical pathology from the American Board of Pathology (ABP), American Osteopathic Board of Pathology (AOBP), or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPS).

  - Pathologists in residency or not board certified by the above organizations may participate in the CME program but will not receive the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition.

  - If there is a reciprocity agreement in place between international and CAP-recognized pathology boards (for example, the recognition between England and Canada), then that person would most likely qualify to participate in an AP³. The individual can submit an exception request and include appropriate documentation to receive a formal review and response to the request.

- Complete a specified core curriculum of acceptable continuing medical education in that program’s area of expertise as described in the program’s requirements. This will vary with each CAP AP³.

- Pass an assessment that measures knowledge of key program content. The scope of knowledge that CAP AP³ participants are expected to know is described in each program.

- Successfully complete one or more practical assessments that measure particular practice skills (for example, the ability to grade prostate adenocarcinoma or the issuance of reports that contain required elements in applicable CAP Cancer Checklists).

Further details about program requirements are listed below:

Educational Core (CME) Requirements

A pathologist must meet certain educational requirements to receive an AP³ certificate of recognition. This requirement varies with each Advanced Practical Pathology Program. It is the responsibility of each participant to participate in and successfully complete required education. Completion of one or more self-assessment modules (SAMs) may be part of the required CME for specific programs.

Cognitive Assessments

To complete a CAP AP³, a pathologist must demonstrate satisfactory performance on a cognitive assessment that measures practical knowledge in a domain of pathology. CAP AP³ participants are eligible to take the cognitive assessment after completing the education requirements. Cognitive assessments will consist of multiple-choice questions delivered online in a proctored environment through an arrangement with a testing vendor—PSI (http://corporate.psonline.com/). CAP AP³ participants are responsible for all associated travel expenses to a nearby testing center and for contacting PSI to arrange a time to take the assessment. Pathologists participating in an CAP AP³ shall be entitled to take the cognitive assessment up to three times to demonstrate satisfactory performance.
For maximum performance effectiveness it is expected the assessment will be completed within six months of program enrollment or no later than six months after the workshop, if applicable.

**Practical Assessment(s)**
A pathologist must demonstrate satisfactory performance on one or more practical assessments that measure performance in a domain of pathology. Participants shall be entitled to take each practical assessment up to three times to demonstrate satisfactory performance. Practical assessments may be offered in conjunction with other educational activities, or may be offered independently, depending on the program.

CAP AP³ participants are expected to complete program requirements within one year following completion of the workshop.

**CAP Application Information**

**Application and Eligibility**
To be eligible to participate in a CAP AP³, a pathologist must complete and submit an application for the specific AP³, sign the appropriate attestations, and pay the applicable fee. Only pathologists certified by the American Board of Pathology (ABP), American Osteopathic Board of Pathology (AOBP), or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPS) are eligible to complete cognitive and practical assessments and receive Certificates of Recognition from the CAP. Pathologists in residency or not board certified by the above organizations can participate in the CME program.

**Applicants With a Disability**
An applicant who wants to request a modification in the assessment environment because of a disability must notify the CAP in writing at the time of application and provide appropriate documentation about the disability and the requested modification. The governing council will consider modification of the testing conditions on an individual basis.

**Application Processing**
Applicants will receive notification regarding the disposition of their application within two to four weeks of the date it was received. If you don’t receive notification within that time, please contact us via email at ap3@cap.org.

**Appellate Rights**
A participant who has been notified that his/her CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition has been denied or revoked may submit a written request for reconsideration to the CAP’s Council on Education within 10 business days after the decision to deny a Certificate of Recognition is rendered.

The request for reconsideration must contain documents supporting the participant’s position and must be based upon the circumstances that existed at the time of the adverse decision. Subsequent remediation will not be considered. It is preferable that all materials be submitted electronically. The pathologist seeking reconsideration may be asked to participate in a conference call to explain the basis of the request for reconsideration.
The Council on Education reviews all documentation and approves or denies an appeal. If the appeal is denied, there is no further action or recourse. The decision is final.

**Appeals Process**

All appeals regarding assessment results must adhere to the following procedures:

- Participant submits appeal and provides supporting documentation to the CAP AP³ in writing within 10 days of the receipt of the denial of the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition. Submissions must include:
  - Results of the practical assessment
  - Results of the cognitive assessment (including score received)

- An appeal letter and supporting documentation must be sent to the CAP via postal mail or email, stating the specific issue/concern and the reason(s) for the appeal.

- The Curriculum Committee reviews appeal documentation and makes a recommendation to the Council on Education within 30 days of receipt of the appeal documentation.

- The Council on Education reviews the appeal documentation and recommendation within 30 days from receipt of the appeal.

- The Council on Education will notify the appellant about the outcome of the appeal within 60 days of receipt of the appeal. If the appeal is denied, there is no further action or recourse. The decision of the Council on Education is final.

Please send appeal letter to:

CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Program Coordinator
CAP Learning and Publications
College of American Pathologists
325 Waukegan Road
Northfield, IL 60093-2750
or
ap3@cap.org

**Program Administration Requirements**

In addition to meeting the requirements of a CAP AP³ in a particular specialty area of pathology, pathologists must comply with program administrative requirements that are detailed in this section.

**Verification**

A pathologist applying for a CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition must agree to release information to the College that allows it to verify conformance with CAP AP³ requirements. This may involve submission to the CAP of the pathologist’s clinical reports or release of authorized copies of medical license, board certifications, or other documentation.
**Adverse Action Notification Requirements**

A pathologist who holds a CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition must notify the CAP as soon as the pathologist finds himself/herself to be the subject of an investigation or adverse action by a state or federal agency or a credentialing department, or in the special circumstance where the pathologist finds himself/herself to be the subject of adverse media attention.

**Complaints**

The CAP, at its sole discretion, may choose to investigate complaints lodged against pathologists holding CAP AP³ Certificates of Recognition or to investigate circumstances that caused a pathologist to be subject to an outside investigation, adverse action, or adverse media attention.

**Fees**

Fees for participation in a CAP AP³ shall apply at the time of application. Each CAP AP³ will be priced individually based on program requirements and design. Additional fees may be applicable for required educational experiences or for retaking practical assessments or cognitive assessments. Fees for the programs are not inclusive of participant travel expenses. Fees for a CAP AP³ will be available in the details of the specific program and as the program become available.

**Protected Health Information**

In the course of completing practical assessments, the programs may require an applicant to submit clinical reports or other materials that contain protected health Information, as defined by the Health Insurance and Portability Act (HIPAA). If a CAP AP³ asks for clinical reports, we require that program participants remove all patient and institution identifying information from the submitted reports.

**Term of Advanced Practical Pathology Certificate of Recognition**

Certificates of Recognition for CAP AP³s are valid for three to seven years from the date of program completion (depending on the program), unless otherwise specified in this document.

A pathologist’s CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition will lapse unless the pathologist submits maintenance requirements and a complete renewal application on a timely basis to allow the assessment of required practical experience and educational experiences. Maintenance requirements are program specific and outlined in the description of each program.

**Program Completion Requirements**

Cap AP³ participants are expected to complete program requirements within one year following completion of the workshop or wrap-up webinar, if applicable.

**General Maintenance Requirements**

**Maintenance and Renewal Requirements**

Maintenance and renewal requirements are established independently for each CAP AP³. These requirements may consist of but are not limited to participation in CME activities and/or other program technical updates, providing evidence of acceptable performance in practice or submitting other documentation demonstrating efforts to apply the information learned to practice.
Certificate Maintenance and Renewal Period
The certificate maintenance and renewal period begins on the date specified on the Certificate of Recognition and continues for the period of time determined by each CAP AP³. During this period, the certificate holder must work towards successful completion of the maintenance and renewal requirements. Upon successful completion of the maintenance and renewal requirements and payment of a $200 renewal fee, a new time-limited certificate will be awarded and a new maintenance and renewal cycle begins. See the individual CAP AP³ manuals for maintenance requirements specific to each program.

Notification of Maintenance and Renewal Deadline
CAP Learning will notify the certificate holder one year in advance of the date his/her certificate expires. Additional reminder notifications will be sent six months, three months, and one month prior to expiration.

Submission of Maintenance and Renewal Materials
Maintenance and renewal materials should be submitted to CAP Learning according to the process specified by each Advanced Practical Pathology Program.

Submissions will be accepted up to three months after the expiration date. If the certificate holder fails to submit his/her materials by this date, he/she will no longer be eligible for renewal of the certificate and would need to repeat the entire program (including payment of fees, CME completion, passing of the assessments, and maintenance and renewal) to obtain the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition.

Cost of Maintenance and Renewal
The cost of maintenance and renewal is $200, not inclusive of costs associated with participation in required CME. Payment should be sent along with submission of the maintenance and renewal materials.

Failure to Meet Maintenance and Renewal Requirements
Should a certificate holder fail to successfully meet the maintenance and renewal requirements specified for the CAP AP³, he/she will be granted a one-time-only three-month grace period in which to successfully meet the requirements. If the certificate holder does not meet the requirements within the grace period, he/she will no longer be eligible for renewal of the Certificate of Recognition and would need to repeat the entire program (including payment of fees, CME completion, passing of the assessments, and maintenance and renewal).

In the event of extenuating circumstances preventing successful completion of the maintenance and renewal requirements within the grace period, certificate holders may petition to extend the deadline. Requests must be submitted in writing to CAP Learning and must specify the reason for the request and the date by which the requirements will be met.

Retention of Maintenance and Renewal Materials
All CAP AP³ participant materials, including maintenance and renewal, will be stored electronically and saved for a period of seven years.
Holding Multiple AP³ Certificates of Recognition

A pathologist who successfully completes all requirements for other CAP AP³ may hold multiple Certificates of Recognition. Each CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition will have its own issue and expiration date.

Misrepresentation

The CAP may revoke CAP AP³ Certificates of Recognition, deny CAP AP³ Certificates of Recognition, or impose other sanctions against any pathologist who makes a misrepresentation relating to the programs. A misrepresentation for purposes of this section includes, but is not limited to, a false statement of fact about the pathologist’s qualifications; fabrication or alteration of information, records, or other documentation; failure to advise the CAP of facts or developments that may bear on evaluation of the pathologist; and misstatement of the board certification status of the pathologist. A misrepresentation may be in writing, through spoken word, or through failure to provide material information.

Deliberate misrepresentation of the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition status by a pathologist may result in sanctions that may take the form of legal action, refusal to process applications or reapplications, or revocation of the CAP AP³ Certificate of Recognition.

Release of Information

Under normal circumstances, the only information the CAP shall release to third parties about a pathologist’s participation in a CAP AP³ is whether the pathologist has received a certificate of recognition in a particular discipline and the date of completion for each CAP AP³ certificate held.

Any information or material received by the CAP in connection with a CAP AP³ is considered confidential and will not be released by the College unless the certificate-holder pathologist authorizes release in writing or unless the College is required by law.

The foregoing notwithstanding, if the CAP at any time learns of any pathologist practices that appear to be unlawful or unethical or that might pose significant risk to patients or the public, the CAP may report such information as it deems appropriate—even without authorization from the pathologist.

No policy, procedure, or other internal document within the CAP relating to its Advanced Practical Pathology Programs shall be released to agencies or organizations outside the CAP without authorization from the CAP’s Council on Education.
No Warranty

The CAP does not evaluate branded instruments, devices, materials, or pathology groups with respect to whether or not such materials or organizations satisfy requirements for CAP AP3s.

The CAP makes no representations and extends no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, regarding the merchantability or fitness of any pathologist’s work for a particular purpose. Unless prohibited by law, the CAP disclaims all liability for claims or damages that may arise from use or reliance upon a pathologist who holds a CAP AP3 Certificate of Recognition.

Conflicts of Interest

The CAP shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure that CAP AP3s are conducted in an impartial and objective manner, uninfluenced by any personal, financial, or professional interest of any individual acting on behalf of the CAP programs. To that end, the following prohibitions apply:

1. No assessor may be engaged in a close personal, family, business, or professional relationship with any applicant that the assessor examines or evaluates.

2. No assessor may solicit or accept, and no applicant may offer or provide cash or noncash gifts of any type, including personal gifts, products, services, or entertainment provided at no cost or unreasonably discounted cost.

3. No assessor may either formally or informally discuss, solicit, or accept offers to provide an employment or consulting arrangement, referral of business, or other business opportunity with a participant. The converse situation applies for a participant.

4. Items #1, 2, and 3 above shall apply through the course of the assessment or examination until 75 days from the date of the assessment or examination.

5. A participant who is found to have violated one of the above prohibitions shall be referred to the CAP for investigation and may be subject to sanctions, including requiring the participant to pay for an additional assessment or examination, refusing to process CAP AP3 reapplications, incurring probation or suspension of CAP AP3 Certificates of Recognition, or denying or revoking CAP AP3 Certificates of Recognition.

Program Changes

The CAP will approve all changes to the CAP AP3s.

The CAP Council on Education shall review all policies governing the programs every three years. Updates to the CAP AP3 Participant Handbook will be made to reflect any policy changes.

Participants and CAP AP3 certificate holders shall be given reasonable advance notice of program changes that may substantively affect their application or their certificate. Such notice shall normally be provided six months in advance of the effective date of a substantive change.
CAP Property Rights

The CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Program is the property of the College of American Pathologists and may not be used without the express permission of the College.

Except to the extent permitted by the fair use provisions of the Copyright Act, any entity that wishes to reprint or translate all or any part of CAP AP3 materials or to incorporate all or any part of any CAP AP3 materials into any other work must first enter into a license agreement by which the entity (a) acknowledges and agrees to respect the CAP’s copyright of the material, (b) agrees to make no deceptive claims with respect to its use of the materials or its relationship with the CAP, and (c) accepts such other conditions, including the payment of a royalty, as may be required by the CAP.

Advertisements and other promotional materials of a pathologist who holds a CAP AP3 Certificate of Recognition from the CAP may include the statement: “CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Program in (name of discipline) awarded by the College of American Pathologists” or any slight variant of this statement. Pathologists who hold a CAP AP3 Certificate of Recognition from the CAP shall not refer to themselves as “board certified by the College.”

A pathologist who holds a CAP AP3 Certificate of Recognition may not use the College’s name or initials except as specified in this policy. The pathologist may not use the logo or wordmark of the College in any manner. A pathologist that is using the name or initials of the College in accordance with this policy must immediately cease use of such name or initials if the pathologist withdraws from the College’s program or has his/her program certificate withdrawn or revoked.

The College reserves the right to withdraw the CAP AP3 Certificate of Recognition, or take legal action against, any pathologist that uses the College’s name, initials, logo, property, or wordmark in violation of this policy. Any question about whether a proposed use of the College’s name or initials comports with this policy should be addressed to the chair of the CAP’s Council on Education at the CAP headquarters.

Help and Support Information

To contact the CAP about any CAP AP3 question or issue, please use the information below:

CAP Advanced Practical Pathology Programs
College of American Pathologists
325 Waukegan Road
Northfield, IL 60093-2750
800-323-4040 option 1
847-832-8000 (fax)
Office hours: 7:30 AM–5:30 PM CT

You may also contact the CAP at cap.org by selecting the Contact Us link at the top of the homepage.