



Anchorage ARC VEC

Remote Exam Procedures Guidance

April 29, 2022

NOTE: Recent changes are highlighted in **YELLOW**

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Pre-Session Activities

Listing Sessions

Exam.Tools

Exam.Tools is the system we use to administer remote examinations. Exam sessions shall be listed on Exam.Tools by authorized individuals. We will attempt to keep at least 2 weeks of sessions posted on Exam.Tools.

SignUp.com

SignUp.com is the system we use for VEs to “sign up” to participate in an Examination session. Exam sessions shall be listed on SignUp.com by authorized individuals. At minimum, we must list any session that is presented on Exam.Tools so that VEs may sign up and be available for those sessions.

As a courtesy to AARC VEC managers, it is important for VEs to take the time to “sign up” on SignUp.com if they indeed plan to be present at a scheduled session. This action helps the entire team to have a good understanding of VE availability, and if we need to contact VEs not signed up for assistance.

Master Tracking Spreadsheet

The Master Tracking Spreadsheet is a Google Sheets spreadsheet and is what keeps us on track. It helps us ensure that an examinee has completed all the steps required for complete registration (Exam.Tools, Payment, Exam Agreement Form). All Lead VEs should have at least VIEW access to this spreadsheet. If you are a Lead VE and do NOT have access, please let the Chairman know as soon as possible.

An entry in the master tracking spreadsheet is initiated by the examinee when they complete the online Examination Agreement Form. Additional information is recorded on the sheet relative to session payment, Exam.Tools registration, and other actions. The tracking spreadsheet is also used to record the signers on an examination and other pertinent information relative to licensing.

There are color coded entries on this spreadsheet.

- **WHITE:** A future examination session, more than 1 day away
- **GREEN:** A session scheduled for the current day, or for the next day or next test date
- **YELLOW:** Testing session is complete; waiting for FCC action on the EBF submission as well as any follow-up on behalf of our VEC
- **BLUE:** Session Complete
- **PURPLE:** Session Complete, South Central Alaska applicant
- **RED:** Canceled

Determining If Applicant Has Completed All Registration Steps

Generally, an applicant’s registration status will be listed on SignUp.com. However, at times they may have registered late, or the VEC management team just hasn’t had time to update the information on Signup.com.

If an examinee is NOT listed on SignUp.com, or if SignUp.com indicates they haven't paid for their session seat or completed the Examination Agreement Form, Lead VEs should check the Master Tracking Spreadsheet. First, they should determine if there is a row for the applicant on the sheet. If not, this indicates the applicant has possibly not yet paid for their session seat, and definitely indicates they have not completed the Examination Agreement Form. **They must do this before they are permitted to test.** Query the applicant if they have paid and have a receipt number. If so, they should ensure they have that receipt number to be included on the Examination Agreement Form at the question that asks for it. If they report that they have NOT yet paid for their session seat, refer them here and ask them to complete Steps #1 and #2 as indicated:

<https://kl7aa.org/fully-remote-testing/>

If they report that they HAVE already paid and have a receipt number, refer them here and ask them to complete Step #2 as indicated:

<https://kl7aa.org/fully-remote-testing/>

- FYI - Step #1 is how they PAY for their session seat.
FYI - Step #2 is how they complete the Examination Agreement Form

This should only take a few minutes to complete. Once it is done and the Lead VE verifies their entry on the Examination Agreement Form, you may administer the examination.

Pre-Session Zoom Call

Whenever possible, a pre-session Zoom should be made with any examinee who has not previously tested with us using our current remote testing process. In most cases, the Lead VE should make the call to the candidate 2-3 hours (or more) before the scheduled session; however, they may complete the call a day or days prior to the scheduled examination if that is more convenient. The pre-session Zoom call will help ensure the technical aspects of the session will be viable and used to inform the examinee of the examination process.

Roles and Responsibilities

FCC Filer

There are a very limited number of VEs on the team who are designated and trained to submit batch files to the FCC for processing. FCC Filers should coordinate with each other to be sure who will indeed submit any batch files.

Remote Session Manager

This is the person who "ramrods" the remote session. The Session Manager guides organizing the session, establishing breakout rooms, working with Leads to make Support VE assignments, and

dealing with any issues or problems that may occur during the session. They are responsible for preparing the batch file to be submitted to the FCC, filing session packages in the appropriate folders on the shared Google drive, filing batch and response files on the Google drive, updating the Master Spreadsheet, and other associated activities. The designated Session Manager should be allowed to coordinate the session. They should delegate responsibilities to other VEs, and other VEs who sometimes act as Session Managers and should be permitted to run the session with minimal interference so as to avoid confusion, but also receive assistance as needed/requested by them.

Lead VE

This is the person who works with individual examinees and Support VEs to administer examinations. Lead VEs should work closely with Remote Session Managers to ensure a smooth session. They should do their best to assist Remote Session Managers as requested. The Lead VE should be allowed to run their individual sessions. They should delegate responsibilities to other VEs as needed, but should be permitted to run the session with minimal interference so as to avoid confusion.

Support VE

Support VEs are those folks who assist the Lead VE in the administration of examinations. They should follow the instructions of the Lead VE and do their best to help make the session run as smooth as possible.

Session Activities

VE Team Communication

Open, honest communication is the most important part of successful examination administration. Remember, we are all on the team and each VE has a legitimate role. Mutual respect, open communication, a good balance of professionalism with an appropriate amount of levity and good humor will go a long way in maintaining esprit de corps with our team (have good situational awareness here, and always, always be respectful). It will also help deliver a great experience to our examinees.

HOT TIP #1: When the Lead VE is attempting to direct the examinee, don't interrupt them unless they ask for help or it is absolutely clear that the issue is not or will not get resolved. We want to avoid having too many folks giving directions as it causes confusion.

HOT TIP #2: VEs should be willing to speak up during exam prep and during the examination if there are concerns or issues with the session. If communication needs to be discrete, as would be the case when an examination is in progress, use Discord to communicate. Lead VEs must be willing to listen to and consider the concerns expressed by participating VEs.

HOT TIP #3: When in the Zoom Main room, please remain silent when the Session Manager or Lead VE is trying to coordinate an activity or give direction to an Examinee. If you feel compelled to have

a discussion with other VEs about something while these activities are going on, head out to a separate breakout room to do so.

HOT TIP #4: Please, please, use good judgement regarding topics of discussion before, during, and after exams. Politics and religion are always taboo subjects and can be divisive, uncomfortable, and alienating. We need to be concerned about our fellow VEs and our examinees, and focus on what we are here for and the joys of amateur radio. 'Nuff said. Thanks.

Zoom Setup

We use Zoom to communicate with and observe the examinee during the test session and to conduct “Pre-Session Zooms” with candidates to make sure their technical issues are resolved. It is best to start the Zoom session approximately 30 minutes prior to scheduled examination time. The Remote Session Manager will typically initiate a Zoom session, but a Zoom session may be initiated by any Lead VE if necessary. When they do so, they should set up Breakout Rooms for each candidate, plus an extra room or two (just in case it is needed).

Only the Remote Session Manager, or someone they designate, should announce on Discord when Zoom is open and ready for sign in.

When VEs join Zoom, each should take a moment to “rename” themselves so that their name, callsign, and location are on display. This helps with communication and is especially helpful to the VE completing the Green Sheet. Example: “Kent, KL5T, Eagle River, AK”.

HOT TIP #1: Please be considerate to others on the Zoom session and MUTE your microphone when having external side discussions. Also, be aware that if you have extraneous noises in the area, they may be picked up and shared with everybody on Zoom. Please try to minimize this condition.

“Start” the Session

“Start” the session on Exam.Tools. Examinees will not be able to login to their Exam.Tools session until the session is started.

DISCORD

DISCORD is the system we use to communicate with each other when examinees are actively taking an examination, or when communications need to be discrete. Lead VEs should direct all participating VEs to “their” Discord text channel and be sure all are there before starting session prep.

Bringing Examinees Into The Session

Examinees should join the session at the time indicted by the VE who conducted the pre-Zoom call. Alternatively, if the team is established and the feeling is that the examinee may be ready to go, the Lead VE may reach out to the examinee to bring them into the session early.

Examinees should first join the Zoom session with their primary device. Their name should be changed by the Lead VE to include the text of “ – primary”. Once the primary device is established, the examinee should be directed to bring in their secondary device. Be sure to advise them that NO AUDIO should be provided via that device (otherwise we can suffer feedback loops and a very

uncomfortable experience). The name on the secondary device should be changed so that it includes the text of “ – secondary”. Once the examinee has successfully joined with both devices, they should be sent invitations on both devices to join the appropriate breakout room. It should be noted that if breakout rooms are set up properly, it is possible to simply move them into the appropriate breakout room.

Examinee Briefing

The examinee should be provided the pre-test briefing to cover all aspects of the testing session such as being alone for the session, no use smart watches, no earbuds/headsets, calculator use, scratch paper use, etc. To make sure the briefing is consistent, it is best to use a checklist. An excellent Lead VE Checklist is available in our Discord “Documentation” text channel.

Examinee Identification

The examinee must present a photo ID issued by a U.S. Government entity (Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, etc.). It may be a driver license, passport, U.S. Visa, Green Card, or similar document. If a minor, the minor’s parent must provide some sort of U.S. Government-issued photo ID. The minor candidate must also provide some sort of identification such as an employer ID card, a health insurance card, a school ID, birth certificate, etc. (does not need to be photo). **Be sure that the identification document is clearly recognized by each participating VE.**

Examinee Testing Environment Check

The examination area must be checked by having the examinee use their secondary device to provide a slow, 360 pan around the room so that all VEs can be certain there are no materials available that could be useful for the exam. The sweep should also include a look at the ceiling above the testing area as well as the area on the floor under the testing area. The examinee’s desk surface should be cleared of extraneous material. Keep an eye out for sticky notes, charts on walls and monitors, and similar items. Any extra or additional computer monitors in the area must be turned off or covered. **Do NOT be afraid to ask the examinee to clean the area up to secure the testing environment.**

Camera Placement

The primary camera should provide a head and shoulder straight on look at the candidate. The secondary camera should be positioned so that it can view the monitor of computer the exam is being taken on, the keyboard/mouse of the exam area, the desktop of the exam area, and a partial view of the candidate. We want to see that the examinee is indeed controlling the computer he/she is using to take the examination on. **Remember, the focus here is to be sure that the examinee indeed has ONLY Exam.Tools displayed on the computer screen the examination is being take on. You may not be able to read the questions, but you should be able to determine that Exam.Tools is all that is displayed.**

Lost Connection Procedures

If there is a **complete** loss of video/audio from the examination location, **the examination must be terminated, or “voided” and a new examination must be started once communications have been restored.** If there is a momentary loss of video from one of the session cameras (just a few

seconds), and it appears there have been no examination anomalies, allow the examination to continue. Confer with your partner VEs on the session via Discord to be sure you are all on the same sheet of music.

Another Party Enters Testing Area

If another party enters the testing area during the examination, the examination **must be immediately terminated, or “voided”** and a new examination must be started once the testing environment is again secure.

Session Recording Procedures

Sessions shall be recorded on Zoom. The candidate’s 2 video feeds will be “pinned” during the recording. The recording should start immediately before the exam starts and stopped immediately after the exam has been graded. **Once the recording is started, the** lead VE should make a statement describing the session, such as, “This is John Doe taking his Element 2 examination on September 30, 2022”. **A view of applicant ID documents should NOT be part of the session recording – this is to ensure compliance with Federal law related to certain federally-issued identification documents.**

Start Exam

Before starting the examination, the Lead VE should ask all VEs on the session if anything was missed during the setup. If not, proceed with starting the examination as indicated here.

The examinee should be instructed to open a fresh browser, full screen, on the primary device. They should then be directed to the Exam.Tools website. If the screen is not being displayed in “dark” mode, direct the examinee to switch to dark mode. Provide the session call sign and pin and have them log on. Have them review their information to make sure it is correct, then proceed to start the exam using the approval procedure on the Exam.Tools website.

VEs should turn off their own video and audio feeds during the examination.

Grade Exam

Once the examinee completes the exam, promptly grade the exam.

HOT TIP: If they pass, **AND** have prepared for the next level of exam, **AND** the VEs at the session are qualified for that level of exam, **AND** the VEs at the session have time, **AND** the Session Manger has time, offer the examinee the next level of exam. **Don’t start that conversation with “Do you want to attempt exam...”. Instead, ask the examinee directly if they have prepared for the next examination with words to this effect, “Have you been studying for your General examination and if so, what scores have you been achieving on those practice exams?”** If they report that they have been scoring in the mid-80’s or higher, continue with examinations. **DO NOT ASK THEM TO TRY THE NEXT EXAM IF THEY CAN’T REPORT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY PASSING PRACTICE EXAMS, OR IF THEY JUST DON’T WANT TO TRY THE NEXT LEVEL.**

If they fail the exam, follow the procedures indicated in the VE Guide.

Advise the examinee that we will complete the paperwork and that we will promptly submit it to the FCC for processing. Advise the examinee about when they should expect to see their callsign or upgrade issued.

If the examinee had answered “Yes” to the felony question, advise them that they will need to contact the FCC. You can refer them to the Anchorage ARC Webpage, then click on “License Testing” in the banner, then near the bottom of the page click on “What if I answer YES to the Felony Question”.

Examinee Paperwork Signing

After the exam is graded, the examinee has passed the exam(s), and no further exams will be attempted, direct the examinee to complete his/her part of the paperwork. They may review their draft CSCE and 605 if they’d like, type their complete name, then enter their actual signature as best they can on the signature block on the Exam.Tools page.

Note: The examinee does not sign when all exams attempted were failed.

HOT TIP: Please have the candidate complete the signing prior to having discussions with them about what to do next (i.e. – clubs, repeaters, equipment, etc.). **Other members of the team may be waiting for you to get your paperwork done so that the package can be submitted to the FCC.**

Early Termination of an Exam

If for any reason an examination needs to be terminated early (i.e. – the examinee elects to stop the test), “void” the exam on Exam.Tools.

Remember, if an examinee fails to follow instructions during the examination session, any examination in progress should be **terminated immediately**. That said, **use good and reasonable judgement in these cases**. For example, an examinee taking their examination in a home bathroom responding to an individual banging on the door or telling them they need to use the bathroom, should probably be accommodated. We don’t want to be militant about this, but we do want to maintain the integrity of the examination process. That said, if an unauthorized person actually enters the examination space, the examination should be terminated.

Post Session Activities

VE Signing on Exam.Tools

Three VEs who have witnessed the **entire** testing session (monitored the examinee briefing, confirmed examinee ID, viewed the inspection of the testing environment, and witnessed the entire exam) may then electronically sign the Form 605 / CSCE. Once the paperwork is signed, the exam session for that individual may be marked as complete on the website.

Even if an examination is failed, three VEs should sign the form 605. This results in a completed form 605 that states that “NO NEW LICENSE OR UPGRADE WAS EARNED”.

HOT TIP #1: Please assign the “signers’ early in the session so as to save time once the exam is done. However please don’t sign until the examinee has signed.

Hot Tip #2: Please do your best to get signing done promptly so that that team members standing by for your session info can get that EBF prepared and submitted. “Situational awareness”.

Hot Tip #3: VEs should NOT sign session paperwork unless they are comfortable doing so. If there are issues with a session then the issues need to be discussed and worked out before signing.

VE Lost Zoom Connection During the Examination

If one of the three signing VEs lost Zoom connection during the session and was unable to witness the entire session, they, or another replacement VE must review the entire session recording. Only then may that VE sign the CSCE/605 electronic document.

Sending CSCE

Once the examination is marked complete, the CSCE should be sent to the examinee from Exam.Tools.

Downloading/Storing Session Documents

The full session package for each examinee should be downloaded as a PDF and stored in the applicant’s folder on the Shared Google Drive by a VE who has access to that drive.

EBF Preparation, Filing, and Storage

The Electronic Batch File (EBF) for the overall session should be downloaded from Exam.Tools and prepared by one of the VEs. A Zoom screen share is advised to help get multiple sets of eyes on the file to be sure it is prepared properly.

Be sure to enter a “VE” line for each examinee location. In most cases on remote exam sessions there is just one examinee at any exam location.

Be sure to check the status of the “felony” question field for each “VA” line. If you note that someone has answered “Y” to the felony question, the affected examinee should be queried to be sure that indeed that was their intent. If the examinee answered “Y”, they will be required to contact the FCC themselves to provide additional information.

Once the EBF is prepared, it should be saved as a text file with a filename in the following format:

CYYYYMMDDZii01.dat

Where:

C = Anchorage ARC VEC, always enter “C”

YYYYMMDD = The 4-digit year, 2-digit month, and 2-digit day of the session date

Z = Remote session

ii = The first and last initial of the individual preparing the batch file

01 = A serial number for the individual for the day. I.e. – the first file of the day for the preparer would be “01”, the second file would be “02”, etc.

.dat = Always “.dat” as the file extension

Example: Here is a file name for a file prepared by Kent Petty on 12/18/2021 as the first file he prepared on that day: C20211218ZKP01.dat

The finished EBF will then be submitted to the FCC on the ULS batch filing page by an AARC VEC “Submitter”.

The finished EBF should then be stored on the Shared Google drive. A copy should be placed in the “@ Batch Files” folder, and a copy should be placed into the folders for each examinee in the session.

Processing/Uploading Session Recordings

The Zoom session recording needs to be “processed” on your local computer, renamed, then stored in the Shared “@ Session Recordings – Staging” folder. The file name should be in the following format:

YYYY-MM-DD Firstname Lastname.mp4

HOT TIP #1: Please use the format as indicated. Don’t use “_” (underscore symbol) instead of “-” (dash). This format is needed to make it easier to locate and sort files.

Downloading Response File

The response file will be downloaded, reviewed, and stored by one of the “Submitters”. If the file is returned with no errors, a copy should be stored in the “@ Response Files” folder, and in the folders of the individuals involved in the testing session.

If there is an error code returned in a “VA” line, a review to determine the reason for the error must be conducted, then a resubmission should be made with the correct data. If a resubmission is in order, the VE line needs to be nulled out and should be entered as follows in every case:

VE|C| | | | | | |

Enter the correct data for the “VA” line(s).

The new EBF should have a unique filename. Use the original filename but update the serial number. **Example:**

Original filename: C20220423ZKP01.dat

New filename: C20220423ZKP02.dat

If there is an error code returned in a “VE” line, a review to determine the reason for the error must be conducted, then a resubmission should be made with the correct data. In the resubmission, only the correct “VE” line will be in the file (presuming the VE line was in error). Name the file with a unique name as indicated above.

HOT TIP #1: If you are unsure of how to process a resubmission, **please don't file!** Contact the VEC Chairman to help guide you through the process.

Change Log

-- Note – newest entries appear first

- 2022-04-29: Added a roles and responsibilities session, added additional instructions regarding recordings, added additional instructions and guidance regarding 2nd cameras, added additional instructions regarding intra-team communication, added additional instructions regarding the need to get paperwork done promptly in breakout rooms after sessions, added comments and direction regarding topics of discussion, added clarification on file naming conventions for video recordings.
- 2022-02-14: Various changes providing additional guidance on VE communication, use of Discord, and VE document signing. Changes made are in ORANGE until next change is applied.
- 2022-01-04: Various changes to clarify procedures