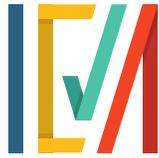**International Council for Veterinary Assessment**

At the ICVA, our core mission is to provide world-class examinations and other assessment tools to protect the public, and animal health and welfare. As such, there is a great deal of time, care, and attention spent to ensure that assessment exams, like the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE®), reflect fundamental core competencies as well as current trends around the knowledge and skills needed by entry-level veterinarians.

As examinations like the NAVLE receive ongoing updates, the passing standard -- the amount of knowledge required for passing -- is also periodically evaluated through a standard setting exercise to ensure that it continues to be relevant, valid, and defensible. This exercise serves as a mechanism to generate evidence on item level of performance that corresponds with minimum competency, which is then used in establishing an appropriate pass/fail cut scores for the examination. Specifically, for the NAVLE, standard setting is the process by which expert judgment (and content expertise) about the tested content is mapped to the test score scale to describe how much content mastery is required for passing candidates. In the case of veterinary licensure, the goals are to ensure that successful examinees have the minimum knowledge required to safely and effectively practice veterinary medicine in the U.S. or Canada, while simultaneously protecting the public from inadequately prepared veterinary practitioners who do not have the knowledge required to pass the test.

There are several best practices associated with standard setting:

- *The panel of participants is typically made up of five to 15 subject matter experts (SMEs) with diverse demographic characteristics, geological location of practice, years of experience, and veterinary medicine area of focus.*
- *Participants in the exercise should be guided by a practice analysis, highly familiar with the nature of practice being evaluated, collectively understand practice within important specialty areas, and have a stake in the pass/fail decisions to be based on test performance.*

- *A standard setting exercise is recommended on a periodic basis to make sure the current passing rates still represents the standard of minimal competency necessary for safe and effective practice. An ongoing evaluation that the current standard is valid and appropriate to use for making pass/fail decisions is a critical part of building and maintaining a successful testing program.*

As one of the final steps in the updating process that began with the most recent practice analysis, the ICVA and National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®) recently completed three standard setting meetings to ensure the NAVLE passing score criterion is still appropriate and reflects minimum competency.

- *To ensure that the broad range of species and competencies on the NAVLE are all evaluated appropriately, over 30 experts across a range of species and competency specialties participated in the exercises.*
- *The SMEs were first trained on the standard setting procedure and then completed an in-depth item review of the examination.*
- *Although one standard setting exercise is considered sufficient for use, given the high-stakes nature of licensure decisions, the recent NAVLE standard setting consisted of three separate exercises. Additional exercises allow for more SMEs to participate, and the aggregated feedback from the larger group participation ensures that NAVLE passing standard was appropriately comprehensive and consistent with best practice standards for educational and psychological testing.*

By including more SMEs and splitting up the exercises into multiple meetings to avoid the "group think" that can happen with a single meeting, this helps ensure that the NAVLE passing standard is fair, defensible, and psychometrically sound.