



VETcert: Certified Veteran Tree Specialist

Scheme Information, Exam Rules & Regulations



Erasmus+



CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Organisation	4
3. The VETcert Steering Group	5
4. VETcert Certification Centres	6
5. VETcert Examiners	8
6. VETcert Invigilators	8
7. General Examination Rules	9
8. Examination Objectives and Name of Certifications	10
9. Candidate Entry Requirements	11
10. Structure and Content of the Examination	12
11. Successful Completion of the Examination	16
12. Repetition of Examination (re-take)	16
13. Maintaining the VETcert Certification	17



VETcert

Certified Veteran Tree Specialist

Scheme Information, Exam Rules & Regulations

1. Introduction

The European Arboricultural Council (EAC), represented by the national associations which make up this council, issues the certification for "Certified Veteran Tree Specialist" (VETcert). **The examination regulations** for the Certified Veteran Tree Specialist have been developed by the VETcert Project and are maintained by the VETcert Steering Group (VSG) in association with the European Arboricultural Council (EAC). They will be revised on a regular basis and updated or amended as required.

1.1. The aim of the examination is to test the knowledge and skills that candidates demonstrate in relation to the VETcert standards. There will be two levels of certification: **Practising** level and **Consulting** level

1.2. **Successful candidates may use the respective title:**

"Veteran Tree Specialist – Practising Level".

"Veteran Tree Specialist – Consulting Level"

1.3 The certification is valid for 3 years.



2. Organisation

- 2.1 The European Arboricultural Council (EAC) is the **managing body** for the VETcert scheme and is responsible for central administration.
- 2.2 Each participating country has a **VETcert Certification Centre (VCC)**, which is responsible for local organisation of examinations. The VCC will inform EAC of planned examination dates and venues at least four weeks prior to the exam date.
- 2.3 The EAC will publish a **calendar of all planned examinations** on the VETcert website.
- 2.4 Candidates in each country can **register with their VCC**, undertake the examination and, if successful, will receive certification from the VCC.
- 2.3 The candidate **examination and registration fee** is payable to the VCC in advance and is not refundable if the candidate fails the examination.
- 2.4 If a candidate is **absent during the examination** the examination and registration fee is not refundable.
- 2.5 For **cancellation costs**, please see the VCC's currently valid terms and conditions.
- 2.6 The VCC must forward all candidate registrations for each VETcert examination to EAC, and on receipt of invoice will pay the EAC the **current registration fee**.
- 2.7 The VCC will provide **registered VETcert Examiners** to conduct and mark the examination.
- 2.8 The VCC will send **results from each examination to EAC** within 28 days of the examination date.
- 2.9 EAC will produce a **paper certificate and plastic ID card** and send these to the VCC within 14 days of receiving the results information.
- 2.10 EAC will add the names of successful candidates to the **published list** of Certified Veteran Tree Specialists, hosted on the VETcert website, within 14 days of notification by the VCC.
- 2.11 The VCC will forward the certificate and ID card to the **successful candidate**.



3. VETcert Steering Group

- 3.1 The standards and delivery of VETcert is overseen by the **VETcert Steering Group (VSG)**. This group is comprised initially of 10 partner organisations who have been responsible for the development of the VETcert standards, quality and delivery arrangements:
- 3.1.1 Ancient Tree Forum (UK)
 - 3.1.2 Arboricultural Association (UK)
 - 3.1.3 Asociacion de Espanola de Arboricultura (Spain)
 - 3.1.4 Conseil Départemental des Côtes d'Armor (France)
 - 3.1.5 European Arboricultural Council (Germany)
 - 3.1.6 Inverde (Belgium)
 - 3.1.7 Pro Natura (Sweden)
 - 3.1.8 Safe Trees (Czech Republic)
 - 3.1.9 Swedish Arborist Federation (Sweden)
 - 3.1.10 Swedish Tree Association (Sweden)
- 3.2 The VETcert Steering Group will be responsible for approving the establishment and continued registration of each participating country's **VCC**. The Steering Group will inform EAC of approved VCCs, which will then be published on the VETcert website by EAC.
- 3.3 The VETcert Steering Group reserves the right to send a supervisor to observe examinations conducted by any **VCC**, as required.
- 3.4 The VETcert Steering Group will be responsible for approving competent, registered **examiners** to carry out the VETcert examinations, including authorising their continued registration.



4. VETcert Certification Centres

- 4.1 Each VCC must:
 - 4.1.1 Be well integrated in the national arboricultural (and if possible veteran tree management) community.
 - 4.1.2 Be a legal entity.
 - 4.1.3 Have the ability to promote the VETcert scheme and publicise the dates and venues for VETcert examinations at Practising and Consulting levels.
 - 4.1.4 Establish an Examination Board for each examination, composed of:
 - 4.1.4.1 The recognised and responsible **VETcert Certification Centre**
 - 4.1.4.2 Two qualified and registered **VETcert examiners**
 - 4.1.4.3 One **invigilator**
 - 4.1.5 Inform EAC of dates and venues for VETcert examinations at least 4 weeks prior to the exam date.
 - 4.1.6 Work with registered VETcert Examiners to arrange the detailed planning for delivery of VETcert examinations.
 - 4.1.7 Set a fee structure for delivery of the VETcert examinations, including the candidate fee for both Practising and Consulting levels, fees payable to examiners, invigilators and venues and the registration fee payable to EAC.
 - 4.1.8 Liaise with relevant venues to host VETcert examinations, including ensuring that there are adequate and suitable trees, examination rooms, and catering arrangements as required.
 - 4.1.9 Arrange for an invigilator to be available for the written aspects of the examination.
 - 4.1.10 Provide an administrative role in accepting candidate registrations, holding registration and examination fees.
 - 4.1.11 Register candidates with EAC and pay the required registration fee per candidate to EAC within 14 days of receipt of invoice.
 - 4.1.12 Communicate with candidates, examiners, invigilators and venue staff to ensure the smooth running of the examination day(s).



- 4.1.13 Securely hold exam papers, model answer papers, completed exam papers and marked papers and treat these as confidential documents.
- 4.1.14 Submit confirmed results from the examination to EAC within 28 days of the date of the examination.
- 4.1.15 Receive the completed certificates and ID cards for successful candidates from EAC within 14 days of the date of submission.
- 4.1.16 Send out certificates and ID cards to successful candidates within 14 days of receiving them from EAC.
- 4.1.17 Communicate with any unsuccessful candidates to inform them of their options for re-sitting the examination.
- 4.1.18 Keep records of registrations, examination results and relevant communication in accordance with current GDPR rules.
- 4.1.19 Offer a complaints procedure for candidates.
- 4.1.20 Cover all costs for running the examination.



5. VETcert Examiners

- 5.1 The VETcert Steering Group will be responsible for approving competent, registered **examiners** to carry out the VETcert examinations.
- 5.2 All VETcert examiners must:
 - 5.2.1 Have undertaken the VETcert examination at the relevant level and achieved a pass mark of at least 80%.
 - 5.2.2 Be listed on the formal list of successful Certified Veteran Tree Specialists, at the appropriate level, on the VETcert website.
 - 5.2.3 Have undergone training in the running of VETcert examinations, including training in assessment technique, the application of the marking scheme and practical benchmarking exercises.
 - 5.2.4 Have attended VETcert examination events, observing examinations and participated as a 'second examiner'
- 5.3 Examiners may be registered to examine at Practising level, Consulting level or both levels.

6. VETcert Invigilators

- 6.1 VCCs will be responsible for identifying **invigilators** to supervise the written sections of the VETcert examination.
- 6.2 Invigilators do not have to be technically expert in Veteran tree knowledge. They must be reliable, responsible individuals with the authority to control the examination environment and to conduct the examination in a considerate, polite and professional manner.
- 6.3 Invigilators must be present during the examination, to hand out written exam papers, instruct candidates in the rules and timing of the exam, and to ensure that there is no conferring or opportunity for candidates to see each other's work. The invigilator will collect all the completed exam papers at the end of the exam and hold them securely before passing them to the examiners for marking.



7. General Examination Rules

- 7.1 On the candidate's application form there must be a signed agreement that the candidate's name may be published on the **VETcert website**.
- 7.2 **Questions must be different** for each VCC's consecutive examination and where a candidate re-sits one or more sections of the examination.
- 7.3 The **examination site** must be **properly secured by the VCC**.
- 7.4 The complete examination may be **halted due to bad weather** or other unforeseen circumstances.
- 7.5 During the exam it is required that the candidates and the examiners wear **Hi Viz Vests** of different colours.
- 7.6 The oral questioning on **specific trees** in the practical exercises must be conducted by **two examiners** and may be reduced to **one examiner** for the **generic** oral questions. The VCC can reserve the right to record parts of the oral questioning.
- 7.7 The language used between the candidate and the examiners must be the same (written and oral); **no translation** or translator is allowed during the examination.
- 7.8 Candidates and examiners are **not allowed** to use **mobile phones to make calls** during any part of the examination unless in an emergency situation.
- 7.9 Candidates and examiners are not allowed **to give interviews** or speak to passers-by during the examination.
- 7.10 Candidates must be **separated in groups** so that they cannot influence each other before and after each section of the examination.
- 7.11 Candidates may **not share or inform** any aspect of the content of the exam to others by verbal, written or digital form.
- 7.12 Candidates undertaking the Consulting exam will be expected to bring a laptop computer to complete the Written Report section; access to the internet during the examination is prohibited and **no part of the digital examination data may be retained** at the end of the examination.
- 7.13 Candidates will be **disqualified** from the examination if it is proven that they have not complied with the scheme rules or if there is a proven attempt to cheat.



- 7.14 The examination reports for the jointly examined sections must be **signed by both examiners**.
- 7.15 The **overall pass mark** for all sections of the examination is **75%**. A minimum pass rate of **50%** for each section of the examination is required.
- 7.16 Candidates will only have successfully passed the complete examination when the results above have been achieved.

8. Examination Objectives and Name of Certifications

- 8.1 In order to prove the candidate's knowledge, skills and experience, which will have been gained by the candidates' training and work experience, the VCC will offer candidate examination at two levels, **Practising** level and **Consulting** level. Each examination includes both written sections and a practical exercises section.
- 8.2 Full details of the Standards for the examinations are available on the VETcert website: <https://www.vetcert.eu/standards-certificates>
- 8.3 **Successful candidates may use the respective title:**
"Veteran Tree Specialist – Practising Level".
"Veteran Tree Specialist – Consulting. Level"



9. Candidate Entry Conditions

9.1 Potential routes of entry to VETcert examination:

9.1.1 *Practising Level:*

Route number	Options
1	<p>Applicant holds the EAC's European Tree Worker (ETW) or arboricultural qualification/certificate recognised by a national Veteran Certification Centre. PLUS Necessary chainsaw and climbing and/or Platform/Lift certifications, required in country of examination. PLUS Minimum five years relevant experience in total.</p>
2	<p>Applicant is able to prove knowledge and experience at an equivalent level to the EAC's ETW or arboricultural qualification/certificate detailed above. PLUS Necessary chainsaw and climbing and/or Platform/Lift certifications, required in country of examination. PLUS Minimum five years relevant experience in total.</p>

9.1.2 Consulting Level

Route number	Options
1	<p>Applicant holds the EAC's European Tree Technician (ETT) or relevant qualification/certificate recognised by a national Veteran Certification Centre. PLUS Minimum five years relevant experience in total, of which three should be in a consulting or advisory role.</p>
2	<p>Applicant is able to prove knowledge and experience at an equivalent level to the EAC's ETT or relevant qualification/certificate detailed above. PLUS Minimum ten years relevant experience in total, of which five should be in a consulting or advisory role.</p>



- 9.2 Deviations from the standard routes for eligibility to the examination as set out above may be considered if the candidate is able to prove, by presentation of certificates or by other means, that he/she possesses the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to be eligible for the examination.
- 9.3 The VCC is responsible for checking if the candidates comply with the entry conditions.

10. Structure and Contents of the Examination

The examination is structured into the following sections:

10.1 Practising Level:

- 10.1.1 Written Examination
- 10.1.2 Practical Exercises

10.2 Consulting Level:

- 10.2.1 Written Examination
- 10.2.2 Practical Exercises
- 10.2.3 Tree Management Reports



10.1. Practising Level

10.1.1 Indoor written examination

Information and rules for candidates:

- You have 120 minutes to complete the exam paper.
- There are two sections to the exam paper; Section A (multiple choice) and Section B (questions that require a written answer).
- You should attempt to answer all questions.
- Please do not confer with other candidate(s).
- The use of technology (phone, camera, etc) is not permitted.

10.1.2 Outdoor practical exercises

Information and rules for candidates:

- The outdoor session will last approximately 120 minutes. It will involve some generic questions and some questions relating to specific tasks.
- You should attempt to answer all questions. No written answers are required.
- Please ensure that you wear your hi-vis vest at all times.
- Please do not confer with other candidate(s). When another candidate is being examined, please maintain a respectful distance.
- The use of technology (phone, camera, etc) is not permitted.



10.2. Consulting Level

10.2.1 Indoor written examination

Information and rules for candidates:

- You have 120 minutes to complete the exam paper.
- The exam paper contains questions that require a short, written answer.
- You should attempt to answer all questions.
- Please do not confer with other candidate(s).
- The use of technology (phone, camera, etc) is not permitted.

10.2.2 Outdoor practical exercises

Information and rules for candidates:

- The outdoor session will last approximately 120 minutes. It will involve a mix of oral questions and exercises.
- The first exercise requires you to undertake a survey of two veteran trees, collecting sufficient information to produce a management plan. Later you will have 120 minutes to prepare the report.
- The second exercise relates to the history of a tree/landscape. There is no requirement to submit any written answer for this tree, however feel free to make notes if you wish.
- The third exercise relates to the risk assessment of a tree. There is no requirement to submit any written answer for this tree, however feel free to make notes if you wish.
- Please do not confer with other candidate(s).
- You may use a camera to take photos of the trees to be included in your report, however no other electronic technology (including internet connection) may be used. You will be given the opportunity to upload your photos to your laptop prior to the start of the Report Writing section.



10.2.3 Management reports

Information and rules for candidates:

- Having surveyed the trees as detailed in the first exercise, candidates will have 120 minutes to complete two reports.
- Candidates will be expected to bring their own laptop computer to the examination. Any photos taken during the survey for the report must be uploaded and available prior to the start of the exam - access to the internet is not permitted during the examination.
- Candidates will be provided with a blank digital report template to complete the reports, and these will be collected at the end of the examination.
- The report template is separated into 9 sections; these are detailed below.

10.2.3.1 Accurately record basic information regarding the trees (e.g. tree form, measurements, etc) (5 marks per tree)

10.2.3.2 Health and vitality of the tree (10 marks per tree)

10.2.3.3 Structural condition of the tree (10 marks per tree)

10.2.3.4 Wildlife, historical, cultural or social values of the tree (6 marks per tree)

10.2.3.5 Describe the two most significant threats to the tree, the cause and scale of the threat (6 marks per tree)

10.2.3.6 Provide two management options with pros and cons for each of the threats identified for each tree (8 marks per tree)

10.2.3.7 Identify your preferred management option with clear justification (12 marks per tree)

10.2.3.8 Provide a detailed specification of any potential work prescribed with a timescale (10 marks per tree)

10.2.3.9 Final conclusions and limitations (6 marks)



11. Successful Completion of the Examination

- 11.1 For either the Practising level or the Consulting level, the examination will be successfully completed when the candidate achieves an overall mark of at least 75% and no less than 50% in any one section.
- 11.2 The mark will be formed from the total of the candidate's performance in all sections of the examination and will be expressed numerically.
- 11.3 Candidates must achieve a minimum pass mark of 50% in each section of the examination. A failure of any section will mean repeating the examination of that section of the exam. No certificate will be issued for incomplete achievement.

12. Repetition of Examination (re-take)

- 12.1 In the case of a re-take of the examination a candidate will not have to re-take any of the sections of the examination he/she has already passed, provided he/she has enrolled for re-take of the examination within two years of the day he/she sat the examination the first time.
- 12.2 A re-take of individual sections or the whole exam can only take place after a minimum of 4 weeks has passed after the first attempt.
- 12.3 A candidate may repeat the examination of individual sections on up to two further occasions in the case of an unsuccessful first attempt. After this, they must apply for a full examination.



12. Maintaining the VETcert Certification

12.1 The Certifications for:

"Veteran Tree Specialist – Practising Level".

"Veteran Tree Specialist – Consulting Level"

Are valid for a period of 3 years from the year of issue.

12.2 In order to maintain the certification the holder must be able to demonstrate that he/she has maintained their knowledge and skills at the required level, including an awareness of developments in the scientific, technical and practical aspects of veteran tree management.

12.3 Certification holders must therefore apply to renew their VETcert certification via their VCC before the expiry date on their certification and before the end of that calendar year.

12.4 In order to maintain their VETcert certification beyond the initial three-year period, holders must:

12.4.1 Complete a VETcert re-registration application form, providing evidence of work experience, continuing professional development (CPD) and engagement within the veteran tree management sector at the appropriate level.

12.4.2 Pay the appropriate administration and registration fee to the VCC.

12.5 The VCC will check that the evidence provided meets the requirements of continued registration and provide details of the certification holders to EAC.

12.6 EAC will produce a **paper certificate and plastic ID card** and send these to the VCC within 14 days, along with the invoice for the re-certification.

12.7 EAC will maintain the names of successfully re-registered certification holders on the **published list** of Certified Veteran Tree Specialists, hosted on the VETcert website, within 14 days of receiving payment from the VCC.



- 12.8 The VCC will forward the certificate and ID card to the **successful re-registered certification holders** within 14 days of receiving from EAC.
- 12.9 If the evidence provided to the VCC does not meet the requirements of the scheme, the certification holder will be given the opportunity to re-submit further evidence within a one-year period after the expiry of their initial certification. However, they will not be registered as holding the certification during this time.
- 12.10 If the certification holder has not provided both adequate evidence and the appropriate fee within 1 year after expiry of their certification, they will need to re-apply to undertake a full entry examination.

VETcert project partners

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