



Commonwealth of Virginia Professional Soil Scientist Examination

INTRODUCTION

The Candidate Information Bulletin (CIB) is intended for your use in the preparation for and understanding of the process and procedure pursuant to your license. The CIB pertains to the Virginia Professional Soil Scientist Examination Program.

The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR), Board for Professional Soil Scientists, Wetland Professionals, and Geologists is responsible for licensure and regulation of the profession.

The Board through DPOR requires an application for licensure, as well as the use of a variety of other forms for Board review and approval. Please follow the procedures as outlined or contact the Board office for the necessary forms, and questions concerning the application or eligibility process at:

DPOR
9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 400
Richmond, VA 23233
Phone: 804-367-8506
Fax: 804-527-4294
Email: BPSSandWP@dpor.virginia.gov
<http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Boards/SSWPG>

EXAMINATION PROCESS

You must pass the national Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination before you can take the national Professional Practice Examination. You cannot take both exams on the same day.

Steps to Testing

1. Download Application Form from the DPOR web site at <http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Boards/SSWPG> or contact the Board at 804-367-8506.
2. Complete Application Form with other requirements and forward to the Board office 60 days prior to the exam date.
3. If approved for the exam, you will receive an Approval Letter from the Board.
4. A Schedule/Admission Letter will be emailed from the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) approximately two weeks following the examination registration period. If you do not have an email address contact the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) at 608-268-4947.

Special Accommodations

If you have a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) you may request an accommodation in taking this examination. A letter is required with supporting documentation no more than three years old on the date of receipt by the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA). It must be received no later than 30 days prior to the examination date.

You will be notified by the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) of the accommodations granted. In making your request, please allow sufficient time for your paperwork to be evaluated and a determination to be made.

Please note: A language barrier is not considered a disability.

Examination Schedule

The following table lists the application deadline dates, examination registration period and examination dates. Information is for the Fundamentals of Soil Science and the Professional Practice examinations.

Application Deadline Date	Exam Registration Period	Exam Date
February 17, 2020	January 13, 2020 – March 6, 2020	April 17, 2020
September 19, 2020	August 24, 2020 – October 9, 2020	Nov 11, 2020 – Nov 18, 2020

After passing the Fundamentals of Soil Science examination, you must demonstrate four years experience prior to taking the Professional Practice examination. You must pass the Fundamentals of Soil Science examination and the Professional Practice examination and satisfy all other requirements to be considered for licensure.

You cannot sit for the Fundamentals of Soil Science examination and the Professional Practice examination on the same examination administration day.

Deadline dates are based on receipt of a completed application and fee and not by postmark date.

Test Site and Reporting Time

Examinations are administered at Virginia Tech. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) will contact you regarding registration and payment for the exam. An email will be sent from the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) approximately two weeks prior to the exam administration that will contain a link to a password protected webpage for you to obtain location and time information.

Refund and Rescheduling Policy

The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) Refund Policy can be found at <https://www.soils.org/certifications/exam-information>

It is your responsibility to contact the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) prior to the test date if you have not received your admission documentation. If you do not appear for testing, you will forfeit your examination fee.

Environmental Distracters

Although every attempt is made to provide a quiet and comfortable test environment, noise and room temperatures may be an unforeseen distracter. It is suggested that if you are sensitive to noise or temperature variations, you may want to bring earplugs and wear attire that can help you to adapt to a cooler or warmer climate in the examination room.

Emergency Policy

In the event of inclement weather or another emergency, an examination may be cancelled or delayed. If cancelled, the examination will be rescheduled within two weeks of the original exam date. Candidates will be notified by the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA).

Admission Requirements

The following is a list of approved IDs in the U.S.: (Source: <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/acceptable-ids>)

- U.S. passport
- U.S. passport card
- DHS "Trusted Traveler" cards (NEXUS, SENTRI, FAST)
- U.S. Military ID (active duty or retired military and their dependents, and DOD civilians)
- Permanent Resident Card
- Border Crossing Card
- DHS-designated enhanced driver's license
- Drivers Licenses or other state photo identity cards issued by Department of Motor Vehicles
- A Native American Tribal Photo ID

- An airline or airport-issued ID (if issued under a TSA-approved security plan)
- A foreign government-issued passport
- Canadian provincial driver's license or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) card
- Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC)

In addition, you will be asked to sign a statement on the front of the exam booklet, which states the following:

“By signing and breaking this exam seal, you agree that you are the person indicated, that you have not been provided answers to any of the exam questions by another person, and that your exam score will not be reported if found copying or using unauthorized materials. Your signature acknowledges that you have read and understand this statement.”

Items for Use in Examination Room

The Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination and the Professional Practice Examination are closed book examinations.

- You should bring #2 pencils with an eraser.
- Personal calculators are not permitted in the exam site, which includes but is not limited to hand held computers of any type, laptops, palm pilots, advanced memory function calculators, etc. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) will provide a calculator that performs simple math functions to each candidate.
- All items brought to the test site will be the candidate's sole responsibility. The Board, the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), and the facility will not be held responsible for any lost, misplaced and/or stolen items.

Items Prohibited in Examination Room

You may not have alcoholic beverages and electronic devices including but not limited to cellular phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), USB drives, cameras, voice recorders, digital watches, computers of any type, mp3 players, and spyware devices in the examination room.

If any of the aforementioned items are found in the possession of a candidate, the Examiner will collect it until the end of the examination and a report will be written documenting the incident to the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) and the Board and may affect licensure.

Electronic devices that are a medical necessity are permitted.

Hats, caps, visors (with the exception of religious apparel), shawls, and hooded clothing are not permitted in the examination room. All tobacco products, electronic smoking devices, food, pens, highlighters, and good luck items are not permitted in the examination room.

Security Guidelines

The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) copyrights all test questions. Copying, reproducing or taking any action to reveal the contents of an examination in whole or in part is unlawful. Removal of an examination booklet, answer sheet or other confidential material supplied to you at the test site is prohibited.

Any irregularity such as an act of impersonation, creating a disturbance, giving or receiving unauthorized information or aid to other candidates, attempting to remove test information by any means, possession of unauthorized notes or equipment is sufficient cause for you to be expelled from the examination room. Any breach of security guidelines or any instances of irregularities will be reported to the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) and the Board and may affect licensure.

No visitors, guests or children are permitted in the examination room.

EXAMINATION CONTENT

Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination and Professional Practice Examination

Candidates approved to take an examination must do so within one year of the date of approval or submit a new application and fee and meet current requirements.

The Fundamentals of Soil Science Examination is 150 multiple choice questions and comprised of 6 content areas.

1. Soil Chemistry and Mineralogy
2. Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management
3. Soil Physics
4. Soil Genesis, Morphology, and Classification
5. Soil Biology and Soil Ecology
6. Soil and Land Use Management

The Professional Practice Examination is 120 multiple choice questions and comprised of 8 content areas.

1. Soil Chemistry and Mineralogy
2. Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management
3. Soil Physics
4. Soil Genesis, Morphology, and Classification
5. Soil Biology and Soil Ecology
6. Soil and Land Use Management
7. Field and Laboratory Techniques
8. Ethics

Performance Objectives for each exam can be found on the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) website at <https://www.soils.org/certifications/exam-information>.

Candidate comment forms will be available at the test site in the event that you wish to comment on a particular test question. Please request a form from the proctor at the completion of your testing session.

Scoring and Reporting

There is no penalty for guessing so it is to your advantage to guess if you are unsure of the correct response. Candidates will be notified of passing or failing the examination, but shall not be notified of actual scores. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) will notify you by email of your results approximately eight weeks following the examination.

Examination results are confidential and will not be released over the phone.

Re-examination

Candidates must retake the failed examination within one year of the date of the initial approval or submit a new application and meet all current requirements.

Candidates will be required to pay the full exam fee for each exam taken, Fundamentals of Soil Science/Professional Practice, including subsequent examinations taken due to unsuccessful attempts to pass an exam. Exams are graded as a total examination (not in content areas) and are pass/fail only.

Study Materials and Resources

Performance Objectives and Resources which cover the content areas for each exam are available. This information can be found on the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) website at <https://www.soils.org/certifications/exam-information>.