

PONTIS COMMUNITY SERVICES



PCS eLearn



VA Accredited Claims Agent Exam – Study Outline

I. Foundational Knowledge

A. Authority & Accreditation

- 38 U.S.C. §§ 5901–5905 (statutory authority for representatives and agents)
- 38 C.F.R. §§ 14.626–14.637 (rules of conduct, accreditation standards)
- Role of the Office of General Counsel (OGC) in oversight and discipline

B. Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

- Standards of conduct for accredited representatives (38 C.F.R. §14.632)
 - Fee agreements and limitations (38 U.S.C. §5904; 38 C.F.R. §14.636)
 - Conflicts of interest, fiduciary duty to veterans
 - Disciplinary process for misconduct
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II. Veterans Benefits Law (Title 38, U.S. Code)

A. Service Connection

- Direct service connection (38 U.S.C. §§1110, 1131)
- Presumptive service connection (chronic diseases, Agent Orange, Gulf War, Camp Lejeune, burn pits)
- Secondary service connection (38 C.F.R. §3.310)
- Aggravation of pre-existing conditions

B. Compensation & Pension

- Disability compensation program
- Disability rating system (VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities – 38 C.F.R. Part 4)
- Total Disability based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU)
- Non-service-connected pension (38 U.S.C. §§1521, 1541, 1542)
- Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) and Special Monthly Pension (SMP)

C. Survivor Benefits

- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
 - Survivors' pension
 - Accrued benefits
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III. Claims Procedures

A. Filing a Claim

- VA Form 21-526EZ, VA Form 20-0995 (Supplemental Claim), VA Form 20-0996 (Higher-Level Review), VA Form 10182 (Board Appeal)
- Initial claims, supplemental claims, and evidence standards

B. Evidence

- Types of evidence: service records, medical exams, lay statements
- VA's **duty to assist** (38 U.S.C. §5103A; 38 C.F.R. §3.159)
- Competent vs. credible evidence
- Benefit of the doubt rule (38 U.S.C. §5107(b))

C. Appeals Modernization Act (AMA)

- Three appeal lanes: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, Board Appeal
 - Legacy appeals vs. AMA system
 - Deadlines for filing
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IV. Special Benefits Programs

- Education benefits (GI Bill, Post-9/11 GI Bill, 38 U.S.C. Ch. 33)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (Chapter 31)
 - VA healthcare eligibility basics
 - Home loan guaranty (Chapter 37)
 - Burial benefits
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V. VA Regulations (38 C.F.R. Title 38)

A. Part 3 — Adjudication

- General rules for compensation, pension, and dependency benefits
- Effective dates (§3.400)
- Reopening claims with new and relevant evidence (§3.156)
- Presumptive conditions and timelines

B. Part 4 — Schedule for Rating Disabilities

- Understanding diagnostic codes and rating percentages
- Application of combined ratings table
- Functional loss, extraschedular ratings

C. Part 20 — Board of Veterans' Appeals

- Jurisdiction, procedures, decisions, and remands
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VI. Exam Preparation Strategy

- **Primary Sources to Study:**
 - Title 38, U.S. Code (esp. §§ 101–210, §§ 301–373, §§ 5100–5109, §§ 5901–5905)
 - Title 38, C.F.R. (Parts 3, 4, 14, 20)
 - **Secondary References:**
 - VA's *M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual* (to understand how VA adjudicates claims)
 - VA forms and procedural guides
 - **Exam Structure:**
 - Multiple-choice, open-book (with electronic access to 38 U.S.C. and 38 C.F.R.)
 - Focuses on **application of statutes and regulations** to fact patterns
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Summary:

To pass the **VA Accredited Claims Agent Exam**, focus your study on:

1. **Accreditation rules & ethics** (38 U.S.C. §§5901–5905, 38 C.F.R. §§14.626–14.637).
2. **Veterans benefits law** (service connection, compensation, pension, survivor benefits).
3. **Claims & appeals procedures** under the AMA.
4. **VA regulations** in Parts 3, 4, and 20 of 38 C.F.R.