

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

Overview

The intent of this document is to ensure fair and unbiased pretests and exams that maintain the standards of the AAA/AAI. Dojocho are encouraged to share this document with their instructors and test candidates.

SECTION 1: PRETESTING Shodan, Nidan and Sandan Ranks

Before a candidate is able to test for a shodan, nidan or sandan rank at a designated AAA testing seminar, he or she must perform a pretest in person at a Hakamakai and receive a majority passing vote. This Hakamakai will occur at least two months prior to the testing seminar.

While the pretest is an opportunity to receive feedback that will improve the formal exam, the candidate is expected to perform on the pretest at a level appropriate for the attempted rank.

Eligibility Requirements for Pretest Candidates

For the pretest to be valid, the candidate must meet the criteria below, and must also show their AAA booklet and most recent teaching certificate:

1. Have the required number of training and teaching days for the proposed dan rank.
2. Have met all seminar attendance eligibility requirements for the proposed dan rank.
3. If applicable, have waited at least six months since failing the most recent pretest.
4. For nidan and above, must be an AAI member in good standing with dues paid for the current calendar year.

The candidate's dojocho is responsible for ensuring that all requirements for the attempted rank have been met.

If a candidate does not meet all of the above requirements, the dojocho must submit a formal request to the Regional Director and Test Committee Chairman for waiving or deferring a requirement. This must be done no less than two weeks before the candidate's pretest, and should include any requests for technique substitutions due to a permanent physical limitation, or for attendance at the testing seminar to qualify as meeting a seminar attendance requirement.

Substitutions for Permanent Physical Limitations

Candidates with permanent physical limitations that would make demonstrating certain requirements impossible, damaging, or against the advice of a medical professional, should request substitutions. If an extensively modified test will be required, the candidate's dojocho should discuss this with the Test Committee Chairman well in advance.

Allowances will not be made for candidates with injuries or temporary limitations. They should postpone their exams.

Candidates whose physical problems prevent them from doing kneeling techniques should request a hanmi handachi substitution: a Test Committee member selected by the Chairman will then request one of the following techniques performed from random attacks:

kotegaeshi, kaitennage, iriminage, shihonage, or kokyunage (the kokyunage used for katate kosadori kokyunage in the 7th kyu exam).

Substitutions for other kinds of limitations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

Test Candidates Transferring from Other Organizations

Candidates who transfer to an AAA dojo and wish to obtain a dan rank are expected to demonstrate established versions of stylistic AAA techniques as described in Section 4.

For yudansha, the date of their last Aikikai dan rank certification may be used for eligibility purposes.

Procedure for Conducting Pretests

1. Utah pretests will be conducted at Hakamakai meetings with the Test Committee Chairman and Regional Director present.
2. Pretest duration will be not less than 15 minutes and will generally be called by the candidate's dojocho.
3. The person conducting the pretest should use the AAA Exam Requirements and may not use a separate list of proposed content.
4. All pretests will be videotaped and uploaded as unlisted YouTube links, then submitted to the Regional Director, who will forward them to absent Utah Pretest Committee members and AAA HQ for comment. Pretest video will remain available online until the candidate passes the dan exam.
5. Pretest topics will include:
 - a. Random kyu requirements/previous dan requirements at the discretion of the person calling the test.
 - b. All requirements for the rank being tested, except for any preapproved substitutions.

Pretest Voting and Feedback

1. The criteria outlined in Section 4 provide the criteria for judging the pretest.
2. The voting options are "pass", "probation" or "fail", as outlined in Section 2.
3. If the majority of the Pretest Committee votes probation or fail, the candidate must wait a minimum of 6 months before attempting another pretest.
4. Voting will be limited to Pretest Committee members who are physically present at the Hakamakai and eligible to vote on an actual dan test of the rank being attempted, as outlined in Section 2.
5. The candidate's dojocho will not be allowed to vote or be present during the vote.
6. The Test Committee Chairman has discretion to abstain from the initial vote and cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie.
7. AAA HQ members and absent Pretest Committee members will have a chance to see the video. They may provide feedback directly to the candidate's dojocho to help improve the candidate's performance. However, their comments will not change the outcome of the live vote performed at the Hakamakai.

SECTION 2: DAN TESTING – Shodan, Nidan and Sandan Ranks

Candidate's Application Paperwork

The Regional Director will inform the candidate's dojocho of the deadline for submitting exam application paperwork, essay(s), and payment as outlined in Section 5. Candidates who miss the deadline may be declared ineligible to test.

The Regional Director will distribute the candidate's essay(s) to Utah Test Committee members and AAA HQ.

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

Requirements for Test Committee Eligibility

1. Rank must be sandan and above.
2. AAI member in good standing with dues paid for the current calendar year.
3. Payment of annual AAI dues for at least 5 previous years for sandan, 8 years for yondan and above.
4. Current teaching certification.

Anyone not wishing to be on the Test Committee, either temporarily or permanently, may opt out.

Test Committee Chairman and Candidate's Dojocho

1. The Test Committee Chairman's duties include:
 - a. Being conversant with these guidelines and instructing Test Committee members as necessary.
 - b. Conducting the vote and comments session.
 - c. Deciding whether to pass exam comments directly to the student and instructor, or only to the student's instructor.
 - d. Resolving issues not specified in this document in a way that safeguards a fair and unbiased exam.
2. If the candidate's dojocho is eligible to participate in the Committee for the rank being tested, it is customary to offer the dojocho the opportunity to conduct the examination.
3. If the test candidate's dojocho declines or is ineligible, the selection of the Examiner should be in the following order: 1) Toyoda Sensei, 2) the Chairman, 3) a Test Committee member selected by the Chairman.
4. The test candidate's dojocho will not be allowed to vote or be present during the vote.

Conducting The Exam

Exams will be conducted only at designated AAA testing seminars, in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. In most cases, assuming a 3-day Friday, Saturday, Sunday seminar structure, exam timeslots will be assigned in the following order: Saturday afternoon, Saturday lunchtime, Friday evening. Exams will normally be held in ascending order with senior ranks testing last. Requests for different timeslots may be given consideration.
2. Exam duration will be not less than 20 minutes.
3. The candidate is asked whether he or she has turned in paperwork, has a valid teaching certificate, has met time and seminar requirements, and paid all required dues.
4. The candidate is instructed to demonstrate exam requirements. Examinations should be spontaneous (not a rehearsed performance) and in accordance with AAA/AAI policy.
5. The person conducting the exam should use the AAA Exam Requirements and may not use a separate list of proposed content.
6. Exam topics will include:
 - a. Random kyu requirements/previous dan requirements at the discretion of the person calling the exam.
 - b. All requirements for the rank being tested, except for any pre-requested and approved substitutions.
 - c. Each Test Committee member may ask for additional previous requirements or repeats.

Voting

The criteria outlined in Section 4 provide the basis for judging the exam.

Voting is conducted behind closed doors or otherwise privately. The candidate's dojocho may not be present. Votes are cast simultaneously, without prior discussion. Options for voting on a pretest or exam are Pass, Probation, or Fail.

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

Pass is used for students whose performance meets the guidelines specified in Section 4 for all sections of the exam, including the requirements from previous ranks.

Probation is used for students whose performance is insufficient in one or more sections of the exam, including the requirements from previous ranks, or whose overall performance is not at a passing level. Probation may be given to students unable to perform long-established versions of stylistic AAA techniques. Probation candidates may retest at a later date, generally 6 months after the original test. However, at the Test Committee's discretion, a minor insufficiency may be addressed with a follow-up demonstration during the testing seminar.

Fail is rarely used, and is reserved for students whose attitude or demeanor is unsuitable for AAA standards - for example, recklessly causing an injury, ignoring directions from the Test Committee, etc.

The Test Committee's vote is a recommendation that could, in rare cases, be overridden by Toyoda Sensei.

SECTION 3: YONDAN TESTS

A submission of two videos is required before a student may become a yondan candidate.

Video 1

An assistant will call out the following techniques, and the student will perform each one, using AAA stylistic forms.

AAA Kihonwaza

- Katatori ikkyo – gokyo, omote and ura
- Katatetori uchi kaitennage, irimi and tenkan
- Katate kosadori kokyunage ura
- Munetsuki kotegaeshi ura
- Shomenuchi iriminage tenkan
- Yokomenuchi shihonage omote and ura

Required Henkawaza

- Katatetori kaitennage 2 var.
- Munetsuki kotegaeshi 2 var.
- Shomenuchi iriminage 2 var.
- Yokomenuchi shihonage 2 var.

Required Oyowaza

- Katatori ikkyo omote 1 var., ura 1 var.
- Katatetori kaitennage irimi 1 var., tenkan 1 var.
- Katate kosadori kokyunage 2 var.
- Munetsuki kotegaeshi 2 var.
- Shomenuchi iriminage 2 var.
- Yokomenuchi shihonage omote 2 var., ura 1 var.

Aikido Association of America Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

This video must be submitted to the Regional Shibucho and Toyoda Sensei.

- Additional follow-up videos may be required dependent on review by Toyoda Sensei.
- After Video 1 has been approved by Toyoda Sensei, Video 2 will be submitted.

Video 2

This will be a demonstration using the same format as the actual exam, with the student performing a kihonwaza, henkawaza, and oyowaza section.

- Each section will start with an assistant calling out the name of the section. No further prompting will be given.
- Each section will be 5 – 7 minutes in length.
- It is not necessary for the student to perform each technique from both left and right sides.
- The kihonwaza section should demonstrate a variety of attacks and kihonwaza of the student's choice.
- The henkawaza and oyowaza sections should start with a kihonwaza, and include all the required related henkawaza or oyowaza, plus the student's own variations.
- Time permitting, the student is encouraged to add extra kihonwaza of their choice with the related henkawaza and oyowaza.

This video must be submitted to the Regional Shibucho and Toyoda Sensei.

- Additional follow-up videos may be required, dependent on review by Toyoda Sensei.
- Toyoda Sensei will distribute this video to senior instructors nationally to receive comments and recommendation from other regions.
- After this video portion has been approved by Toyoda Sensei, the student becomes a candidate for yondan testing at the National Instructor Seminar in Chicago.

Yondan Exam

The yondan exam at the National Instructor Seminar in Chicago will consist of an interview by Toyoda Sensei, a teaching portion, and the physical demonstration.

The content of the physical demonstration will be the same as that of Video 2.

The topic of the teaching portion will be given to the student upon arrival.

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

SECTION 4: VOTING CRITERIA – all ranks

Pretest and Test Committee members are expected to be familiar with the following performance and AAA stylistic characteristics and to use them as judging and feedback criteria:

Required Characteristics of Candidate's Performance

Presentation (any rank):

- Good mat presence (posture, relaxed, calm demeanor, zanshin, safe application of techniques)
- Observing correct exam etiquette
- Presence of mind (ability to understand commands and make corrections).

Shodan:

- Ability to do all basic techniques without hesitation
- Good entries to techniques (taisabaki)
- Good mechanics without muscling
- Posture breaking (kuzushi) before throwing
- Pivot throws, sudori, shomen-ate (face-push) on randori.

Nidan:

- Shodan requirements plus:
- Ability to connect smoothly with partners
- Good timing
- Doing techniques WITH, rather than TO, uke
- Not fighting/struggling with uke during randori.

Sandan:

- Nidan requirements plus:
- Demonstrate mature toshu (empty-hand) techniques
- Adjust to the level of any partner
- Proper form and precision with weapons
- Visible fluid connection with partner
- Display strategy during randori.

Yondan:

- Demonstrate maturity of connection, timing, and movement as required for previous ranks
- Kihon waza demonstration must reflect AAA stylistic preferences
- Henka and oyo waza sections must include all of the required AAA techniques
- Henka and oyo waza sections must include variations created by the candidate
- Candidates must be able to discuss connections between kihon, henka and oyo waza techniques and justify their own interpretations.

Aikido Association of America
Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

Required Stylistic Characteristics of AAA Techniques

Technique	AAA Version	Typical Other Version
Ikkyo	Irimi is “flat” without much upward rotation or lifting of uke’s arm, directed away from uke’s center. Applied by rotating the hips outward. Tenkan is “flat” without much upward rotation or lifting of uke’s arm.	Irimi is typically pushing uke’s elbow upward, either directly towards uke or slightly to his front. This can be applied with rotating the hips outward or stepping towards uke with the inside foot. Tenkan typically lifts uke’s elbow upward, pushing towards uke’s front before leading to the rear.
Iriminage	Nage keeps uke moving forward while trapping the head. While uke is moving forward, nage’s elbow rises, tilting uke’s chin upward, breaking uke’s posture as he moves past his center. The throw is directed across uke’s back.	Nage strikes down uke’s attack to make uke lean forward. As uke stands up, nage pushes uke’s head backwards, breaking his balance. The throw is directed towards uke’s rear.
Kaitennage (uchi irimi)	After going under uke’s arm, nage cuts down while stepping forward.	After going under uke’s arm, nage cuts down while stepping back.
Koshinage	As uke starts to fall, nage steps back with the foot closest to uke while facing towards uke.	Applied with no step back, uke falling to nage’s side.
Kotegaeshi	The use of a large circle during the throw, whether omote or ura. With the omote version, stepping back.	Typically small circle throws. Usually done towards uke’s side with stationary feet or stepping in with the foot nearest uke.
Shihonage	The pivot is done while keeping uke’s arm extended with a flat, horizontal rotation while ducking the head. The pivot ends facing towards uke and the throw is directed across uke’s back.	The pivot is done by raising uke’s hand in a high, vertical rotation. The throwing position is roughly parallel to uke and the throw is directed towards uke’s rear.
Bokken (yokomenuchi block)	Bokken is held to the side near the hip, usually with a small hip movement towards the strike.	Bokken is held in front, rotating the whole body towards the strike.
Jo Nage	Lifting the jo overhead before whipping it downwards in a large, extended cut.	Small rotation of the jo, more of a thrust than a cut.
Bokken and Jo Yokomenuchi	The strike originates from the top of nage’s head, similar to shomenuchi with a slight angle.	The strike originates from the side of nage’s head, in an angle often up to 45 degrees.

Aikido Association of America

Utah Pretest and Test Committee Guidelines

SECTION 5: AAI DAN RANK PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS

If you have questions about how to complete these forms please contact the Regional Director.

Scan or clearly photograph all items below (including relevant booklet page) and send to the Regional Director to be checked.

The candidate is responsible for bringing all hard copies to the testing seminar.

Shodan:

- Application forms (4):
 - AAI Application for Dan Rank
 - (Hombu) Application for Dan-Kyu Grading Examinations
 - (Hombu) Aikido Headquarters Registration Form
 - (Hombu) Application for International Yudansha Card
- Membership booklet with AAA Instructor Seminar attendance verification (since attaining 1st kyu)
- Copy of Jyoshu certification (issued at AAA Instructor Seminar)
- Essays (2)

Nidan, Sandan, Yondan:

- Application forms (2):
 - Aikido Association International Application for Dan Rank
 - (Aikikai) Application for Dan-Kyu Grading Examinations
- Instructor Certificate (issued at AAA Instructor Seminar)
- Hombu Dojo and AAI booklet showing Camp attendance (since last test)
- Essay

Fees: (check payable to AAI)

Shodan: \$300 (\$200 test fee, plus one-time \$20 IAF fee, plus one-time \$80 Aikikai fee)

Nidan: \$350

Sandan: \$450

Yondan: \$550

Current forms can be obtained from the Regional Director.