Overview & Facts



6

Everything you need to know about sitting for the Uniform CPA Exam as an Illinois Candidate.

Revised 6.3.15

Overview:

The information provided in this brochure is intended to inform Illinois candidates about the application process, administration, and general format and structure of the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam.

- > The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) develops, administers, and grades the CPA exam.
- Individual states establish the requirements for CPA certification and licensing. Since state regulations vary, domestic (U.S.) CPA exam candidates are encouraged to apply to the state in which they plan to obtain licensure.
- Candidates who submit transcripts from an institution located outside of the U.S. are considered to be international candidates. International candidates are encouraged to apply to the state in which they plan to obtain licensure.
- The Illinois Board of Examiners (ILBOE) has sole responsibility for setting policy and rules for Illinois CPA candidates.

The CPA exam format and content does change. Candidates should frequently review the information posted on the websites listed below.

Organization and Website	Site Content		
Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS) www.icpas.org/students.htm	 Illinois CPA Society student website Link to AICPA tips for taking the CPA exam Links to CPA Exam Award Program and scholarship information Link to information regarding the required ethics exam for Illinois CPAs 		
Illinois Board of Examiners (ILBOE) www.ilboe.org help@ilboe.org	 Illinois educational requirements to take the CPA exam Illinois credential evaluation (transcript review) form, application form to take CPA exam, and related fees Illinois Board of Examiners 1120 E. Diehl Rd., Suite 107, Naperville, IL 60563 Phone: 815-753-8900 Fax: 815-753-8953 		
National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) www.nasba.org/exams/cpa candidatecare@nasba.org	 Payment of fees for taking CPA exam Links to state boards of accountancy or examiners Information for candidates applying for CPA exam administration at a site outside of the U.S. and its jurisdictions Reviews transcripts for international candidates Candidate care phone: 1-800-CPA-Exam 		
American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) www.aicpa.org/becomeacpa/gettingstarted	 CPA Candidate Bulletin: Information for Applicants describing general structure, content and length of each section of the CPA exam CPA exam tutorial and sample exams for each section For CPA candidates who have paid fees to NASBA, free software to practice FAR and AUD research questions Content Specification Outlines (CSOs) and Skills Specification Outlines (SSOs) describe content and skills tested on each section of the CPA exam 		
Prometric www.prometric.com/cpa	 List of test centers available Test center policies and procedures Online scheduling for CPA exam sections 		
Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation (IDFPR) www.idfpr.com	 Illinois CPA licensing requirements Continuing professional education (CPE) requirements 		

Candidates who plan to be licensed in Illinois need to apply to the Illinois Board of Examiners (ILBOE) to take the exam. The following questions will assist Illinois candidates in understanding the ILBOE online application and exam approval process at **www.ilboe.org.**

1. Where should candidates apply to take the CPA exam?

Candidates should apply to take the CPA exam in the state in which they plan to practice and become licensed. The licensing requirements differ from state to state.

Candidates who plan to be licensed in Illinois need to apply to the ILBOE to take the CPA exam. There is no residency requirement to apply to take the CPA exam in the state of Illinois. International candidates (those with foreign transcripts) may apply to take the CPA exam in Illinois whether or not they plan to practice in Illinois.

Some states have different educational requirements to take the CPA exam. Candidates who take the CPA exam in those states (prior to meeting the Illinois education requirements) will not be able to *transfer their CPA exam scores* to Illinois. These candidates will be required to re-take the CPA exam, unless they are able to transfer a CPA license from another state.

Generally, if a candidate wishes to become *licensed* in another state, the candidate must have fulfilled that state's educational requirements as of the date they sat for the first section of the CPA exam. Such candidates should contact that state's board of accountancy or examiners. Contact information is available at **www.nasba.org/exams/cpa.**

2. What educational requirements must be met by first-time Illinois candidates applying to take the CPA exam?

The table at the end of this brochure summarizes the current educational requirements. For details about the Illinois educational requirements, see the ILBOE website at **www.ilboe.org.**

3. How do DOMESTIC candidates request a credential evaluation (transcript review)?

Domestic candidates are those that have earned ALL academic credits, excluding a study program, in the United States. These candidates must complete an "Academic Credentials Evaluation Application," submit the appropriate fee to the ILBOE, and have their official academic transcripts **sent to the ILBOE**.

4. How do INTERNATIONAL candidates request a credential evaluation (transcript review)?

International candidates are those who have earned SOME, excluding a study abroad program, or ALL academic credits outside of the United States. These candidates must complete an "Academic Credentials Evaluation Application," submit the appropriate fee, if applicable, to the ILBOE, and have their official transcripts sent as follows: a) **Domestic** academic transcripts **sent to the ILBOE;** and b) **International** academic transcripts **sent to NASBA.** The ILBOE does not accept results from evaluation services other than NASBA. A higher evaluation fee is charged and additional time may be required. Please see **www.ilboe.org** for further details.

5. When should candidates request a credential evaluation?

The credential evaluation determines a candidate's academic eligibility to apply for the CPA exam. The application to take the exam is the candidate's request to take one or more CPA exam sections. Candidates may submit the CPA exam application at the same time they apply for the evaluation or any time after (before or after being approved to sit).

Candidates will be required to request official transcripts from every institution attended, even if courses transfer and appear on the transcripts of another institution.

6. How do Illinois candidates (domestic and international) apply for the CPA exam?

Prior to applying for the CPA Exam, a candidate must establish an online user ID at **www.ilboe.org** by clicking on the "Online System" and follow the credential evaluation process described in the above questions. All forms needed are located at **www.ilboe.org/forms.** The process to actually apply to take the CPA exam includes the following steps:

- Submit an "Initial Examination Application," (which identifies the section(s) of the CPA exam that you intend to take within the next six months) and pay the related fee to the ILBOE. (See Question 27 for additional information.) Candidates with learning and/or physical disabilities should so indicate on their application and submit the "Request for Special Accommodations" form at the same time that they submit their "Initial Examination Application." Professional documentation of the existence of a disability is required.
- Wait for the ILBOE to issue an approval letter via email.
- Check email for a payment coupon from NASBA for the testing fees for each CPA exam section that you specified on your Illinois application. The testing fees cover the costs of the development, update, administration, and grading of the CPA exam, as well as computer test time, digital photo taken at the test center, etc.
- Pay the related fee to NASBA within 90 days of receiving payment coupon.
- Wait to receive the Notice to Schedule (NTS) from NASBA.

- Upon receipt of the NTS, which is valid for six months for Illinois candidates, go to <u>www.Prometric.com/cpa</u> to schedule one or more of the CPA exam section(s) listed on the NTS. (Additional information for candidates seeking approval to take the CPA exam outside of the U.S. is available at www.nasba.org/exams/cpaexam.)
- > Print the NTS. It must be presented at the Prometric testing location for each exam section.
- Read the CPA Candidate Bulletin: Information for Applicants available at <u>www.aicpa.org/BecomeACPA</u> to determine what is needed at the test center and the testing procedures. Do not skip this step; at the testing center, candidates will be asked to confirm that they have read this bulletin.
- > Go to the AICPA website to view the CPA exam tutorial and work on the sample exam for each exam section.
- Take the scheduled CPA exam section(s).
- Wait for score(s) from the ILBOE. Access score(s) using the online system at www.ilboe.org.

7. Is a candidate allowed to take one or more CPA exam sections prior to completing their coursework?

A first-time candidate who is currently enrolled in a U.S. educational institution may be permitted to take the CPA exam prior to completing all educational requirements. This candidate must submit an Initial Examination Application no earlier than the academic term in which they expect to complete all educational requirements. A "Courses in Progress (CIP)" form must be submitted with the "Academic Credentials Evaluation Application" form. Courses in progress will be counted in addition to the completed courses toward meeting the educational requirements. A candidate can list courses in progress for only one academic term. Only one Authorization to Test (ATT) (for one to four exam sections) will be issued to a candidate. Once approved, the candidate is referred to as a "provisional" candidate and becomes eligible to take one or more sections of the CPA exam.

In order to receive their test score(s), the provisional candidate must submit final, official transcripts to the ILBOE within 120 days of taking the first section of the CPA exam. If final, official transcripts verifying completion of all courses listed as courses in progress are not received by the ILBOE within 120 days or if the candidate is not eligible after review of the final, official transcripts, scores for all exam sections authorized with provisional approval will be voided.

Provisional candidates have to take their first part of the CPA exam within a specific timeframe. Please see **www.ilboe.org** for further details.

If a provisional candidate fails to test by the appropriate date above, provisional status will be revoked and the candidate will not be allowed to test until all educational requirements have been met and all final, official transcripts submitted. Provisional students cannot see their scores until all final, official transcripts have been received and reviewed by the board and the provisional status has been cleared.

8. Is it advisable to apply for all four exam sections on the initial application?

The candidate has the option to apply and take all four exam sections in one testing window or to spread the four sections among several testing windows. If the candidate does not intend to take all four sections within six months, then the candidate should only indicate on the application the exam section or sections he/she plans to take within the six-month period.

9. When is the CPA exam offered? When are the testing windows?

The CPA exam is offered at Prometric test sites during the first two months of each testing window. Candidates may take one or more sections of the CPA exam during any of the following four testing windows:

Testing Window 1	Testing Window 2	Testing Window 3	Testing Window 4
January-February April-May		July-August	October-November

The four exam sections may be taken in any order. A candidate can only schedule the section(s) approved in each application. Each section can be taken only once in a testing window.

10. How do candidates obtain free software to practice research questions?

The Tutorial and Sample Tests at <u>www.aicpa.org/BecomeACPA</u> include sample research questions; however, only the portion of the database needed to answer the research question is available within the Sample Exam. To use the full databases to practice research skills for AUD and FAR, go to <u>www.aicpa.org/BecomeACPA/CPAExam/ForCandidates/</u>howtoprepare/pages/literature.aspx.

11. Are there review courses available to help candidates prepare for the CPA exam?

Candidates can learn more about the CPA review courses at **www.icpas.org** and through educational institutions. Discounts are available to student members of ICPAS.

12. Is the CPA exam disclosed or non-disclosed?

The CPA exam is a non-disclosed exam. Candidates are required to agree to a statement of confidentiality prohibiting any disclosure of exam information, content, or format.

13. Is there a time limit for passing all four sections of the CPA exam?

All exam sections must be successfully completed within 18 months from the date the candidate sat for the first successfully completed section. A candidate who does not successfully complete all four exam sections within the 18-month time period will be required to retake the earliest section(s) passed until all four sections are passed within a single 18-month time period.

14. If a candidate is approved to take, and pays for, multiple CPA exam sections at once, must the candidate take all sections within a single testing window?

Candidates are not required to take all sections within one testing window. Candidates should be aware that each Authorization to Test (ATT) and subsequent payment coupon issued by NASBA is valid for only 90 days, and the NTS is valid for only six months. Therefore, a candidate who applies for and pays for multiple sections at one time should take those sections within six months. If the candidate does not take any section included in the application within six months, the candidate must reapply and pay the Illinois and NASBA exam fees again (but not the credential evaluation fee) for any exam section not taken.

15. What is the general structure, content, and length of each section of the CPA exam?

Candidates are encouraged to read the CPA Candidate Bulletin: Information for Applicants, complete the CPA exam tutorial, and work on the sample exams available at **www.aicpa.org/becomeacpa.**

Thorough familiarity with the exam's functionality, format, and directions is essential before reporting to a test center. Failure to follow the directions provided may adversely affect candidate scores. The CPA exam functionality, format, and directions do change. Accordingly, candidates should regularly check **www.aicpa.org/becomeacpa** for new information as it becomes available.

CPA exam content and skills are included in the "Content Specification Outlines" (CSOs) and "Skills Specification Outlines" (SSOs) available at **www.aicpa.org/BecomeACPA.** The CSOs/SSOs list the skills tested, the weighting of each skill, exam topics, and the reference sources for each section of the exam. The CSOs/SSOs do change. Accordingly, candidates should regularly check **www.aicpa.org/BecomeACPA** to access the most recent CSOs/SSOs.

The following table summarizes the information set forth in the Candidate Bulletin: (Candidates should be aware that the AICPA is currently reviewing CPA Exam Section content and format, and some changes may occur in 2015; candidates should check the AICPA's website for the most current information.)

Section	Name	Time	Format	Description
AUD	Auditing and Attestation	4 Hours	 Three multiple-choice testlets consisting of a total of 90 questions. One testlet with seven task-based simulations, including one to two research questions. 	This section covers knowledge of International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), U.S. generally accepted auditing standards (GAAS), PCAOB standards, and other standards related to attest and nonattest engagements, standards relating to professional responsibilities issued by various bodies, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.
BEC	Business Environment and Concepts	3 Hours	 Three multiple-choice testlets consisting of a total of 72 questions. One testlet with three written communication tasks. 	This section covers knowledge of general business environment and business concepts that candidates need to know to understand the underlying business reasons for, and accounting implications of, business transactions, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.
FAR	Financial Accounting and Reporting	4 Hours	 Three multiple-choice testlets consisting of a total of 90 questions. One testlet with seven task-based simulations, including one to two research questions. 	This section covers knowledge of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and U.S. generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) for business enterprises, not- for-profit organizations, and governmental entities, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.
REG	Regulation	3 Hours	 Three multiple-choice testlets consisting of a total of 72 questions. One testlet with six task- based simulations, including one to two research questions. 	This section covers knowledge of federal taxation, ethics, professional and legal responsibilities, and business law, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

16. How many times may a candidate take an exam section?

There is no limit on the number of times a candidate may retake a failed exam section. However, it is important to note that a candidate can take a given exam section only once in a testing window.

17. Are there any particular times when scheduling at test centers is more difficult?

Candidates seem to prefer the last two weeks of each testing window. Those weeks are booked more quickly than others. In addition, Saturdays also book early.

18. What are the Prometric test center hours?

Hours of operation will vary among Prometric test centers. Some Prometric test centers offer evening and weekend hours. Please consult **www.prometric.com/cpa** for each test center's hours and days of operation.

19. What rules must candidates follow at the Prometric test center?

Complete rules regarding exam procedures, confidentiality, and break policy can be found in the CPA Candidate Bulletin at **www.aicpa.org/becomeacpa.**

20. Will Illinois candidates receive a numeric score for each CPA exam section?

Candidates will receive a numeric score for each exam section ranging from zero to 99. A score of 75 or higher indicates successful completion of that exam section. Candidates who fail a section will also receive a Candidate Performance Report (CPR). The report provides candidates with information about the strengths and weaknesses of their exam performance.

21. How do candidates receive their scores?

Candidates are able to access scores using the online system at <u>www.ilboe.org</u>. All candidates will receive scores in the mail. Go to <u>www.nasba.org</u> for information about score release dates. Once they are uploaded to the ILBOE's system, notification will be posted at <u>www.ilboe.org</u> and via social media.

Provisional candidates cannot see their scores until all final, official transcripts have been received and reviewed by the ILBOE and the provisional status has been cleared.

22. If necessary, when may candidates retake a CPA exam section?

Candidates who do not pass an exam section will receive a Candidate Performance Report (CPR) from the ILBOE. Candidates who do not pass an exam section may not retake that section until the next testing window after the failed section was taken. To reapply, a candidate must complete a re-examination form and pay the related fees to both the ILBOE and NASBA.

23. How does a candidate meet the separate Illinois Ethics exam requirement?

Illinois candidates are required to pass a separate Ethics exam on the rules of professional conduct. Currently, the Ethics exam requirements are fulfilled by completing the "Professional Ethics: AICPA's Comprehensive Course," which includes an openbook exam. Illinois candidates should request that their scores be forwarded to the ILBOE when they register online to complete the exam. The exam may be retaken; a score of at least 90% is required. Currently, this score does not expire. For faster service, please submit the certificate to the Help Desk at **help@ilboe.org.**

24. How does a candidate obtain the Professional Ethics: AICPA's Comprehensive Course (i.e., the Ethics exam)?

The Illinois CPA Society offers the Ethics course and exam to its members at a reduced price. Students can apply for a free student membership by going to **www.icpas.org** or call 312.993.0407, option 4 and then order the Ethics exam online at: **www.icpas.org/cpaexam.htm**.

The candidate may also purchase the course and exam directly from the AICPA. The candidate can access information about the course on the AICPA site **www.cpa.com.** Key in "Ethics Course" in the Search Box and be sure to select "Professional Ethics: AICPA's Comprehensive Course."

25. When must an Illinois candidate meet the Ethics exam requirement?

Candidates may choose to complete the Ethics exam requirement before or after passing the CPA exam. Many exam takers prefer to take the Ethics exam before they take the AUD part of the CPA exam since it also covers ethics.

Currently, there is no mandated time frame for successful completion of the Ethics exam; once taken, it does not expire. Candidates will not be eligible for licensing until the Ethics exam requirement has been met. This requirement does not need to be met within the 18-month time period and can be completed at any time, even before the candidate has been approved to take the CPA exam.

26. Is funding available to help defray the costs of the CPA exam for eligible Illinois candidates?

The CPA Endowment Fund of Illinois has raised funds to support permanent Illinois residents who are studying accounting and are planning to become a CPA. The CPA Exam Award Program was developed specifically to cover the NASBA fees, which represent a large portion of the total CPA exam fees. Candidates must demonstrate achievement as well as financial need. Applications are accepted throughout the year. For more information, go to **www.icpas.org/students.htm.**

27. What fees do Illinois candidates pay to take the CPA exam?

A candidate has the option to apply and take all four exam sections in one testing window or to spread the four sections among several testing windows. If the candidate does not intend to take all four sections within six months, then the candidate should only indicate on the application the exam sections they plan to take within the six-month period. Thus, the fees paid when applying depend on the number of exam sections indicated on a candidate's application. See next page for fees.

Fees are as of the printing of this brochure. All fees are subject to change. Go to <u>www.ilboe.org</u> and <u>www.nasba.org</u> for current fee information.	First-Time Illinois Candidates Testing at U.S. Test Centers	First-Time Illinois Candidates Testing at International Test Centers
 ONE-TIME credential evaluation fee paid to Illinois Board of Examiners: Domestic credentials evaluation fee International credentials evaluation fee 	\$175.00 \$250.00	\$175.00 \$250.00
 CPA Exam application fees paid to Illinois Board of Examiners each time a candidate applies to test: One exam section listed on application Two exam sections listed on application Three exam sections listed on application Four exam sections listed on application 	\$40.00 \$76.00 \$108.00 \$120.00	\$40.00 \$76.00 \$108.00 \$120.00
 Testing fees billed by and paid to NASBA: Auditing and Attestation Financial Accounting and Reporting Regulation Business Environment and Concepts 	\$192.03 \$192.03 \$172.51 \$172.51	\$307.97 \$307.97 \$327.49 \$327.49

28. How does a candidate become licensed in Illinois?

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) is the sole authority for CPA licensing in the state of Illinois.

Candidates will be required to be **licensed before they can practice and hold themselves out as CPAs** (for example, on resumes, job applications, business cards, letterhead, websites, etc.).

Once a candidate has passed all four sections of the CPA exam within an 18-month period, completed the separate Ethics exam, and met the one-year experience requirement for "accountancy activities," as defined by the IDFPR, the candidate may then apply to the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for a license at **www.idfpr.com**.

Educational Requirements for Illinois Candidates

Any credits earned in excess of maximums stated count towards the 150-hour requirement.

- 1. 150 Semester Credits Hours (SCH) or 225 Quarter Credit Hours (QCH).
- 2. Baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally accredited school.

3. Degree earned from an accredited school:

- A. Graduate degree in accounting*:
 - Accounting program must be accredited by AACSB or ACBSP
 - No requirements for SCH in Research & Analysis in Accounting (RAA), Business Communications (BC), or Business Ethics (BE)
- B. Graduate degree in business*:
 - Business program must be accredited by AACSB or ACBSP
 - Minimum of 30 SCH in accounting
 - At least one course each in financial accounting, auditing, taxation, and management accounting
 - 2 SCH in integrated or stand-alone RAA (maximum towards the 30 accounting SCH)
 - No requirement for SCH in BC or BE

- C. A bachelor's degree in any field or a graduate degree in a discipline other than accounting or business not accredited by AACSB or ACBSP:
 - · Minimum of 30 SCH in accounting
 - At least one course in financial accounting, auditing, taxation, and management accounting
 - 2 SCH in integrated or stand-alone RAA (maximum towards the 30 accounting SCH)
 - Minimum of 24 SCH in business other than accounting
 - 2 SCH in integrated or stand-alone BC and 3 SCH in integrated or stand alone BE (maximum towards the 24 business SCH)

 * For purposes of meeting the accounting hours requirement, one graduate accounting SCH is equivalent to 1.6 SCH.

4. Internships or Life Experience

- A. Maximum of 3 SCH toward 30 SCH accounting requirement
- B. Maximum of 3 SCH toward 24 SCH business requirement
- 5. Provisional approval of courses in progress see question #7.

The Illinois CPA Society...

Helping you prepare for the CPA Exam and so much more!

Whether you are working to pass the exam, climb the career ladder, or expand your professional network, the Illinois CPA Society is with you every step of the way.

Member benefits include:

- A CPA Exam Award scholarship opportunity to offset the cost of the CPA Exam by approximately \$750.
- Savings on the required Ethics Exam.
- Online CPA Exam Center including exam tips, requirements, testing locations and more.
- Young Professionals Group social and professional events.
- Career Center job listings and resources.
- Discounts on Becker, Gleim, Kaplan Schweser, Roger CPA and Yaeger review courses.

Join today!

Learn more about these exciting member benefits at **www.icpas.org.**





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Jeannie M. Folk, CPA - Author, Consultant, and Professor Emeriti, College of DuPage

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Elizabeth A. Murphy, Ph.D., MBA, CPA - Associate Professor, DePaul University

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