

pa cpa exam requirements

PA CPA Exam Requirements

The journey to becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in Pennsylvania (PA) is a structured but rewarding process that involves meeting specific education, examination, and experience criteria. Understanding the PA CPA exam requirements is crucial for aspiring CPAs, as it sets the groundwork for a successful career in accounting. This article delves into the essential requirements, the examination process, and tips for aspiring candidates.

Educational Requirements

To qualify for the CPA exam in Pennsylvania, candidates must meet certain educational prerequisites. These requirements ensure that candidates have a solid foundation in accounting principles, finance, and related subjects.

Degree Requirements

1. Bachelor's Degree: Candidates must hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution.
2. Credit Hours: A minimum of 150 semester hours of college education is required. This typically exceeds the standard 120 hours needed for a bachelor's degree.

Coursework Requirements

In addition to the degree, candidates must complete specific coursework:

- Accounting Courses: At least 24 semester hours in accounting courses are required. These courses should cover topics such as:
 - Financial Accounting
 - Managerial Accounting
 - Taxation
 - Auditing
 - Accounting Information Systems
- Business Courses: Candidates must also complete at least 24 semester hours in business courses. Acceptable subjects include:
 - Business Law
 - Finance
 - Management
 - Marketing
 - Economics

Application Process for the CPA Exam

Once the educational requirements are met, candidates can proceed to apply for the CPA exam.

Applying for the Exam

1. Create an Account: Candidates must create an account with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA).
2. Submit Application: Fill out and submit the CPA exam application, including the necessary documentation to verify educational qualifications.
3. Pay Fees: Candidates must pay the application fee and the examination fees, which can vary based on the number of sections being taken.

Approval and Scheduling

After submitting the application, candidates will receive a Notice to Schedule (NTS) once their application is approved. This document is essential for scheduling exam dates. Candidates can choose to take each of the four CPA exam sections during a rolling 18-month period after passing the first section.

Examination Requirements

The CPA exam consists of four sections, each testing different areas of knowledge necessary for a CPA.

Exam Sections

The four sections of the CPA exam are:

1. Auditing and Attestation (AUD): Focuses on the processes and procedures in auditing.
2. Business Environment and Concepts (BEC): Covers general business concepts, including corporate governance and economic concepts.
3. Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR): Tests knowledge of financial accounting standards and reporting practices.
4. Regulation (REG): Concentrates on business law, ethics, and taxation.

Exam Format and Duration

- Each section is composed of multiple-choice questions, task-based simulations, and written communication tasks (only in BEC).

- The exam is computer-based and can be taken at designated Prometric testing centers.
- Each section has a time limit of 4 hours.

Experience Requirements

After successfully passing the CPA exam, candidates must fulfill the experience requirement to obtain licensure.

Work Experience

- Timeframe: Candidates must complete at least one year (1,600 hours) of relevant accounting experience.
- Supervision: The experience must be supervised by a licensed CPA within a firm or organization.
- Types of Experience: Acceptable work experience includes roles in public accounting, industry accounting, government, or academia.

Verification of Experience

Candidates must provide documentation of their work experience, which includes a verification form signed by the supervising CPA. This documentation must detail the nature of the work performed and confirm that it meets the board's requirements.

Ethics Exam Requirement

In addition to passing the CPA exam and fulfilling the experience requirement, candidates in Pennsylvania must also pass an ethics exam.

Ethics Exam Details

- Exam Provider: The AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) offers the ethics exam.
- Format: The exam is typically a self-study course followed by an online exam.
- Passing Score: Candidates must achieve a passing score as set by AICPA.

Licensure Application Process

Upon completing all exam, experience, and ethics requirements, candidates can apply for CPA licensure in Pennsylvania.

Applying for Licensure

1. Submit Application: Candidates must submit a licensure application to the Pennsylvania State Board of Accountancy.
2. Fee Payment: Licensure applications require payment of a fee, which varies based on the type of license.
3. Documentation: Applicants must include proof of education, work experience, and completion of the ethics exam with their application.

Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

Once licensed, CPAs in Pennsylvania must fulfill continuing professional education (CPE) requirements to maintain their license.

- CPE Hours: CPAs are required to complete 80 hours of CPE every two years.
- Ethics Requirement: At least 4 of the 80 hours must focus on ethics.

Conclusion

Becoming a CPA in Pennsylvania is a detailed process that requires dedication and commitment. From completing educational requirements to passing the CPA exam and gaining relevant work experience, each step is crucial for laying a solid foundation for a successful career in accounting. By understanding the PA CPA exam requirements and preparing adequately, candidates can navigate the path to becoming a licensed CPA with confidence. As the accounting profession continues to evolve, the role of CPAs remains essential, making this a valuable and respected career choice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the educational requirements to sit for the CPA exam in Pennsylvania?

In Pennsylvania, candidates must have a bachelor's degree with at least 150 semester hours of education, including 24 credits in accounting and 24 credits in business courses.

Is there a residency requirement for taking the CPA exam in Pennsylvania?

No, there is no residency requirement to sit for the CPA exam in Pennsylvania. Candidates from other states can apply as long as they meet the educational and experience requirements.

What is the application process for the CPA exam in Pennsylvania?

Candidates must submit an application through the Pennsylvania State Board of Accountancy, including proof of education, application fees, and a character reference. Once approved, they can schedule their exam through the AICPA.

How many sections are there in the Pennsylvania CPA exam, and what are they?

The Pennsylvania CPA exam consists of four sections: Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), and Regulation (REG).

What is the passing score for each section of the CPA exam in Pennsylvania?

The passing score for each section of the CPA exam is 75 on a scale of 0 to 99.

Are there any continuing education requirements for CPAs in Pennsylvania after passing the exam?

Yes, CPAs in Pennsylvania are required to complete 80 hours of continuing professional education (CPE) every two years, with specific hours in ethics and accounting-related subjects.

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