



Taking the Computerized CPA Exam in Montana

published by the Montana Society of Certified Public Accountants

INTRODUCTION:

The information provided in this brochure is intended to inform candidates about the general format and administration of the computerized uniform Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examination. Much of this brochure's content is intended to assist Montana examination candidates. Anyone planning to take the CPA examination should regularly review the information posted on the websites listed in this publication for updates, as additional information about the new CPA examination may become available.

Overview

Beginning in 2004, the Uniform CPA Examination will be offered on computer at a network of test centers across the United States and its territories. The last pencil-based CPA exam was administered in November 2003.

The Montana State Board of Public Accountants has engaged **CPA Examination Services (CPAES)**, a division of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, Inc. for **application processing, credential evaluation, and grade reporting**. They may be reached at 1-800-CPA-EXAM; www.nasba.org; cpaes-mt@nasba.org. If you have any questions regarding the examination application or process, this is who you *must* contact.

Course Work

A candidate submitting an initial application must have completed 24 hours of upper division or graduate level accounting courses including at least one course in each of the following subject areas: (a) financial accounting; (b) auditing; (c) taxation; (d) management accounting. In addition, each candidate must have completed 24 semester hours in business related courses.

Preparing for the Exam

A tutorial is available at www.cpa-exam.org and is intended to familiarize candidates with the computer-based examination's format, functionality, and questions and response types. In a study conducted between

November 18 and December 9, 2003, more than 80 CPA candidates got a firsthand look at the new, computerized Uniform CPA Examination. Volunteers selected from a pool of candidates who had taken the paper-based CPA exam earlier in November tested the delivery system of the new test in an operational setting. This is what they said:

- Familiarity with the computer is a big plus in taking the test.
- The testing environment is much more comfortable.
- Scheduling flexibility makes studying easier.
- **Using the tutorial is vital for success.**
- Real-world experience is a help.

Sample tests are available at http://www.cpa-exam.org/lrc/exam_tutorial.html

Applying to Take the Exam

Candidates should apply to the state in which they plan to practice. Requirements are NOT the same in all states.

The application process begins at the State Board web site: <http://www.mscca.org/goto.cfm?page=www.discoveringmontana.com/dli/bsd&returnto=displayassociationlinks.cfm>. Here you will find all the forms needed to apply for the exam. Some forms may not be under the "Examination Application" heading. You will find the additional forms you are looking for under the heading "Additional Forms" towards the bottom center of the page.



Application Fee: \$170.00

Examination Fee: Fee depends on the section

Auditing and Attestation	\$134.50
Business Environment and Concepts (BEC)	\$100.50
Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR)	\$126.00
Regulations (REG)	\$109.00

Once an application is reviewed and approved by CPAES an Authorization To Test (ATT) is prepared and sent to the NASBA Gateway System. It will take 24-48 hours to process.

Scheduling the Exam

Once your application has been processed, and you have been determined to be eligible to take one or more sections of the Uniform CPA Examination and you have paid all fees, you will receive a Notice to Schedule (NTS). Once the NTS has been received you may contact Prometric, Inc., www.prometric.com, to schedule your examination(s). Once an NTS has been issued, you have six months in which to schedule and take the approved examination section(s).

The exam will be offered the first two months of each calendar quarter. These months are known as the "testing windows."

For 2004 the testing windows will be:

April 5 - May 30, 2004

July 1 - August 30, 2004

October 1 - November 30, 2004

Once you pass an exam section, an 18-month rolling time period begins. This means that all remaining sections must be successfully completed within 18 months from the date of sitting and successfully completing the first section.

**Join the
Montana Society of CPAs**

A student membership in the Montana Society of CPAs gives you insight into the CPA Vision, including the growth services of the future and the competencies you'll need to deliver those services. You'll also receive all the benefits of a full membership including . . .

- \$20 discount on the *Professional Ethics for Certified Public Accountants* self-study test that is a requirement of the CPA license.
- Employment opportunities
- Valuable networking opportunities
- Full member access to the MSCPA web site
- Valuable industry publications focused toward students

Student Membership \$15

In order to qualify for student membership in the MSCPA you must have at least junior standing at a Montana college or university that is accredited to offer a baccalaureate degree with a concentration in accounting.

For more information, or to join online, go to our web site at <http://www.mscca.org/registernewmembers.cfm>.

Website Resources

<http://www.mscca.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=6>
Montana Society of CPAs' website featuring a Student Section with exam resources including links to the following sites.

www.discoveringmontana.com/dli/pac
Educational requirements needed to receive authorization to test in the State of Montana. This site also includes application materials for candidates who plan to sit for the CPA exam in the State of Montana.

www.nasba.org
National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) website featuring examination information including the Candidate Bulletin.

www.cpa-exam.org
Examination tutorial showing question formats, sample questions and examination structure, content, and grading policies.

www.Prometric.com/cpa
List of test centers available in the 54 jurisdictions (United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia). There is also a list of test center policies and procedures for the CPA examination.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions have been designed to assist candidates in understanding the new examination process and format. For more information contact:

Eletta T. Niles
CPA Examination Services
615/880-4262

or Sue Criswell
Montana Board of Public Accountants
406/841-2389
dlibsdpac@state.mt.us

What does the Computer-Based Test look like?

The format of the CBT is similar to that of the pencil-based exam. Approximately 80% of the first three sections of the exam and 100% of the fourth section of the exam continue to be comprised of four-option, multiple-choice format questions. The remaining 20% will consist of one or two simulations per exam section with one exception: A new section, called Business Environment and Concepts, is comprised entirely of multiple-choice questions, at least through the end of 2004. For a preview of the CBT and to review the tutorial provided by the AICPA, visit www.cpa-exam.org. Periodically consult this website for new information as it becomes available.

Has the CPA exam content changed from the pencil-based format?

Yes. There have been some modifications and additions to the previous content outline. Visit the AICPA website www.cpa-exam.org to view the CPA exam content details, referred to as "Content Specification Outlines (CSOs)."

What areas of study are most important to passing the CPA exam?

Visit the AICPA website www.cpa-exam.org/download/CSOs%20for%20revised%20CPA%20Exam.pdf to download the AICPA's Uniform CPA Examination – Examination Content Specifications. This publication will give you precise guidance on areas of study.

Will the exam continue to be confidential?

Yes. The CPA examination will continue to be a non-disclosed exam. Candidates are required to sign a statement of confidentiality prohibiting the disclosure of any examination information, content or form.

Must I sit for all four sections within the same testing window?

No. A candidate may schedule to sit for any number of sections within a testing window.

Is there a time limit within which I must complete all four sections?

Yes. Once a candidate passes an exam section, an 18-month rolling time period begins. This means that all remaining sections must be successfully completed within 18 months from the date of sitting and successfully completing the first section.

May I select the order in which I take the four exam sections?

Yes. Candidates are free to sit for the four exam sections in any desired order.

Once my application has been processed and I pay for all four sections at a time, must I sit for all section within a testing window?

No. Candidates are free to sit for each exam section in any order, within any testing window.

However, candidates should be aware that the Notice to Schedule (NTS) issued by NASBA is valid for six months.

Where are the Prometric test centers in Montana?

There are two testing centers in Montana:

PTC/SLC 3700
2225 Broadwater
Billings
(406) 656-4646 and

PTC/SLC
1075 N. Rodney, Suite 110
Helena
(406) 443-9205



Will I be allowed to go back to test questions during the examination?

Yes. Each exam section consists of testlets. A testlet is described as a group of questions consisting of either multiple-choice or simulation formats. For example, the Auditing and Attestation section consists of three, multiple-choice testlets and two simulation testlets. Candidates may move freely within an individual testlet. Once an individual testlet is closed, candidates are not permitted to reaccess that testlet.

What materials am I allowed to bring into the Prometric test centers' examination room?

Candidates are not permitted to bring any outside materials into the examination room. Personal items such as purses and coats are stored in a locker outside of the examination room. The test center will provide scratch paper for use during the examination. An on-screen calculator may be accessed during the examination. Hand-held calculators are not permitted. Food and drink are not permitted. Candidates may exit the room during the examination only upon completion of a testlet. Candidates are not permitted to exit the room for any reason while working within a testlet. While a candidate is on break, outside the examination room, the exam timer continues to run. While in the examination room, candidates are monitored via closed-circuit cameras. A digital photo is taken as the candidate enters the examination room.

Are special accommodations available for candidates with learning disabilities?

Yes. Candidates desiring special accommodations should contact CPAES and request an official modification form. This form must be completed every time an application is submitted and special modifications are needed. Professional documentation of the existence of a disability is required.

When will I receive my score?

Scores in Montana will be disbursed by the NASBA Gateway System. For the first testing window of April through May 2004, the anticipated AICPA score release date, to the state boards, is around July 15, 2004. Candidates must allow extra time for the state boards to release scores to individuals. Beyond the first testing window, the AICPA

anticipates a reduction in the length of time required to release scores to candidates.

Will I receive a numeric score for each CPA exam section?

Yes. Candidates will continue to receive a numeric score for each exam section ranging from 0 to 99. A score of 75 or higher indicates successful completion of that examination section. In addition to the score, candidates will receive a diagnostic evaluation of exam results.

If necessary, when may I retake a CPA exam section?

Candidates cannot retake a failed section within the same testing window. Visit www.discoveringmontana.com/dli/pac to obtain the reexamination form.

How much will the new CPA exam cost in Montana?

The fee for a first-time candidate, without international credentials, sitting for all four sections is \$640. For more information about fees, please visit www.discoveringmontana.com/dli/pac.

If I have passed two or three sections of the pencil-based CPA exam, how will my conditional credit transition to the CBT?

Applicants who have attained conditional status under the paper-and-pencil exam are allowed a transition period to complete any remaining test sections. The transition period lasts until the earlier of the following occurs:

- a) the applicant has exhausted the number of exam attempts remaining under the paper-and-pencil exam
- or
- b) the remaining time that the applicant had under the paper-and-pencil exam to retake the test sections not yet passed has expired.

What changes will there be for foreign candidates?

The computer-based exam makes it possible for foreign candidates to take the exam in any state now. Foreign transcripts will continue to be reviewed in the same procedure as the pencil-and-paper exam.