Chartered Professional Accountants | CPA PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

CPA Professional Program

Exam Guide

Issued August 25, 2026

Table of Contents

Exam Guide

Purpose of the Exam Guide

The purpose of the Exam Guide is to prepare candidates for the exams that make up the CPA Professional Program (and the Knowledge Assessment) by outlining the objectives, format, and content of each of the exams.

Testable Competencies

The Module Guide elaborates on the vision of Competency Map 2.0. It elaborates on Decision Competencies (DCs) and also translates the Specific Competencies (SCs) into representative learning outcomes that a CPA would likely encounter at the associated proficiency level for each of the exams. The exams will be designed to assess candidates based on these expectations and proficiency levels.

The learning outcome statements in the Module Guide are representative. They are not intended to be, nor should they be viewed as, an all-inclusive list of outcomes that may be tested on the exams.

In addition, although the focus of each exam will be on the learning outcomes listed for each module, all prior learning is also testable.

The number of learning outcomes associated with a particular topic is not indicative of the extent to which that topic will be assessed on the exam (that is, more outcomes in a particular topic compared to another does not mean that more content weight is assigned to that topic). This Exam Guide provides the content allocation for each exam.

Foundational & Sub-foundational Competencies

The assessment opportunities on the exams (except the Knowledge Assessment) will not be designed to directly assess the Foundational and Sub-foundational Competencies; these competencies will be woven into the scenarios and requirements and will, therefore, be assessed in an integrated manner alongside the DCs and SCs.

For example, an assessment opportunity may address the topic of Assurance and Trust, which would be the primary focus, together with an underlying integration of emerging technology. That same assessment opportunity would also require candidates to demonstrate their proficiency in a variety of DCs.

Assessment of Competencies

While Specific Competencies 4 and 6 (SC4 and SC6 in Competency Map 2.0) are an important part of a learner's competency development, they will be assessed only within the modules and not on any of the CPA Professional Program Exams due to their nature and timing.

Cut-off date for testable materials

The cut-off date for testable materials is updated once each year, beginning with the May examinations. For all examinations written from May 1 of a given year through April 30 of the following year, the testable materials are:

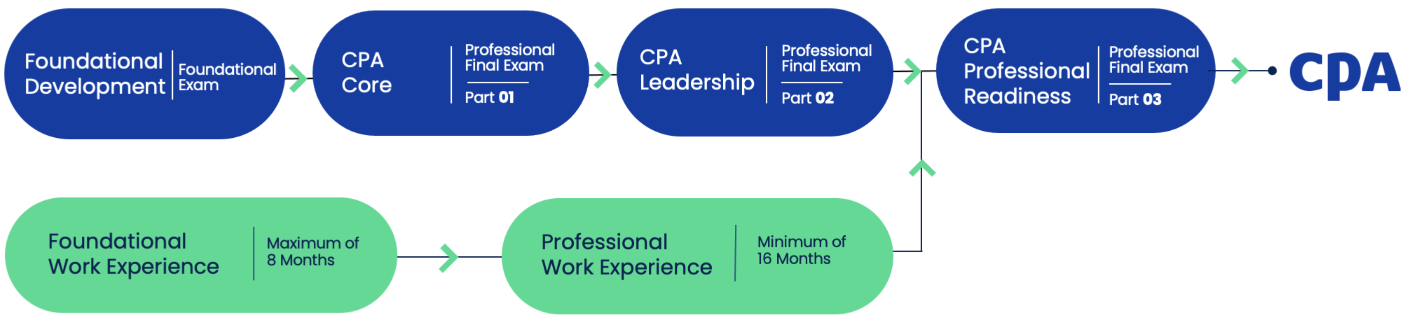
- All standards in the CPA Canada Handbook – Accounting (IFRS, ASPE, and ASNPO) and the CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance that are effective January 1 of the year the examination cycle begins; and
- Tax legislation enacted and substantively enacted (which includes legislation passing third reading in the

House of Commons during a minority government) as of January 1 of that same year.

For example, examinations written in May 2028, September 2028, and January 2029 all test standards effective, and tax legislation enacted and substantively enacted, as of January 1, 2028.

Candidates may always apply a more current standard on the case portions of an examination (noting that the reference materials are updated only once per year, in line with the cut-off above). Objective-format questions, however, strictly follow the cut-off date, since the applicable effective date must be unambiguous.

CPA Professional Program Exams Summary



Exams	Format	Time Allocation
Foundational Development	50 objective-format questions[1] representing 33% of the exam	5 hours
	4-8 testlets[2] representing 67% of the exam	
CPA Core – Common Path	Two to three cases, each between 60 and 120 minutes	3 hours
CPA Core – Licensure Path	Part A: Two to three cases, each between 60 and 120 minutes, totaling 3 hours	5 hours
	Part B: One 2-hour case	
CPA Leadership	One 5-hour comprehensive case	5 hours
CPA Professional Readiness	One 2-hour case focused on professional-judgment	3 hours
	One 1-hour case focused on ethical decision-making	

In addition to the CPA Professional Program Exams, there is an optional entrance exam, the Knowledge Assessment. The Knowledge Assessment is a way for candidates who do not meet the necessary entrance requirements for the CPA Professional Program to demonstrate that they have the prerequisite knowledge and competencies that will help them be successful in the program.

Exams	Format	Time Allocation
Knowledge Assessment	150 objective-format questions	5 hours

[1] Objective-format questions may include but are not limited to multiple choices questions, multiple-select questions, fill in the blank and drop-down list.
[2] A testlet is a set of objective-format questions built using a shared scenario, so that each question is answered using the same underlying information.

Foundational Development Exam Blueprint

Exam Format

The Foundational Development Exam will consist of:

- 50 small objective-format questions, representing 33% of the exam and
- 4–8 testlets, representing 67% of the exam.

Objective-format questions may include, but are not limited to, multiple-choice questions, multiple-select questions, fill in the blank, and drop-down list. A testlet is a set of objective-format questions built using a shared scenario, so that each question is answered using the same underlying information. Each testlet will be designed to take candidates between 20 and 60 minutes to respond.

Candidates will be given five hours to complete the exam (average of 2 minutes per mark).

Up to 10% of the questions will be pre-test questions. A pre-test question is an unscored item that is used to collect statistical performance data for future use.

Passing Standard

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard for candidates' performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions. Candidates will need to meet this standard to pass this exam.

For the Foundational Development Exam, candidates will be required to meet the following standards in order to pass this exam:

- Achieve sufficiency across the combined areas of 1) Financial Reporting and 2) Management Decision-Making and Information (Data) Systems/Technology
- Achieve sufficiency on the overall exam

The Foundational Development Exam will be a non-disclosed exam.

Content Allocation

The following table summarizes the topic areas and the allocation of content assessed on the Foundational Development Exam:

Specific Topic Area		Allocation
Area I	Assurance and Trust	5%-10%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	5%-15%
Area III	Ethical Decision-Making and Organizational Governance/Data Governance	5%-15%
Area IV	Finance	5%-15%
Area V	Financial Reporting	10%-20%
Area VI	Management Decision-Making and Information (Data) Systems/Technology	15%-25%
Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	5%-15%
Area VIII	Strategy, Risk Management, and Innovation	5%-15%
Area IX	Tax	5%-10%
Area X	Value Creation	*May be integrated in other topics*

Reference Material

Candidates will have access to the following restricted reference materials while responding to the exam: the *CPA Canada Handbooks*, the *Income Tax Act*, and the *Excise Tax Act*.

CPA Core (Professional Final Exam 1)

All candidates will write either the CPA Core – Common or CPA Core – Licensure exam, depending on which module they chose. CPA Core – Licensure is for candidates who are considering a public accounting licence.

CPA Core – Common Exam Blueprint

Exam Format

The CPA Core – Common Exam will consist of two to three cases, each between 60 and 120 minutes.

Candidates will be given three hours to complete the exam. Candidates are responsible for managing the time allocation between the cases, since it will not be controlled as part of the exam.

The cases will include non-complex situations and require candidates to demonstrate some integration among competencies. Integration across competencies is limited and usually prompted by the case requirements. Direction on how to address issues will be provided through clear requirements and case facts. These cases are not meant to be time pressured.

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard for candidates' performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions.

For the CPA Core – Common Exam, candidates will be required to meet the following standards in order to pass this exam:

- Achieve sufficiency on the overall exam
- The CPA Core – Common Exam will be a non-disclosed exam.

Content Allocation

The following table summarizes the topic areas and the allocation of content assessed on the CPA Core – Common Exam:

Specific Topic Area		Allocation
Area I	Assurance and Trust	20%-35%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	5%-15%
Area V	Financial Reporting	20%-35%
Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	5%-15%
Area IX	Tax	10%-25%

Reference Material

Candidates will have access to the following restricted reference materials while responding to the exam: the *CPA Canada Handbooks*, the Income Tax Act, and the Excise Tax Act.

CPA Core – Licensure Exam Blueprint

Exam Format

The CPA Core – Licensure Exam will consist of two parts, as follows:

Part A – Two to three cases, each between 60 and 120 minutes, totaling three hours and

Part B – One two-hour case

The cases will include non-complex situations and require candidates to demonstrate some integration among competencies. Integration across competencies is limited and usually prompted by the case requirements. Direction on how to address issues will be provided through clear requirements and case facts. These cases are not meant to be time pressured.

Candidates will be given five hours to complete the exam. The time allocation for each part of the exam will be controlled (the time will be limited to three hours for Part A and two hours for Part B).

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard for candidates' performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions.

For the CPA Core – Licensure Exam, candidates will be required to meet the following standards in order to pass this exam:

- Achieve sufficiency on the overall exam (Parts A and B combined)
- Demonstrate readiness for licensure. This means demonstrating a sufficient level of depth of knowledge and skills expected of a licensed CPA in licensure specific situations (Part B).

In any particular sitting, Part A of the CPA Core – Licensure Exam will contain the same cases as the CPA Core – Common Exam and therefore it will be possible for candidates to pass only Part A to progress in the CPA Professional Program. These candidates will not meet the requirement for licensure eligibility pre-certification, however they will have a future opportunity post-certification to write a separate exam to become eligible for licensure.

The CPA Core – Licensure Exam will be a non-disclosed exam.

Content Allocation

The following tables summarize the topic areas and allocation of content assessed on the CPA Core – Licensure Exam:

Part A

Specific Topic Area		**Allocation**
Area I	Assurance and Trust	20%-30%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	5%-15%
Area V	Financial Reporting	20%-30%
Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	5%-15%
Area IX	Tax	10%-20%

Part B

Specific Topic Area		**Allocation**
Area I	Assurance and Trust	30%-50%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	0%-10%
Area V	Financial Reporting	20%-40%
Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	0%-10%
Area IX	Tax	15%-25%

Reference Material

Candidates will have access to the following restricted reference materials while responding to the exam: the *CPA Canada Handbooks*, the *Income Tax Act*, and the *Excise Tax Act*.

CPA Leadership Exam Blueprint (Professional Final Exam 2)

Exam Format

The CPA Leadership Exam will consist of one five-hour comprehensive case.

The comprehensive case will be a moderately complex situation that will require candidates to demonstrate a high level of integration of the competencies, as well as critical thinking skills and the CPA Ethical Mindset. Candidates are expected to demonstrate how different analyses inform one another and lead to cohesive decisions.

This case will provide limited direction and less prescriptive requirements, requiring candidates to determine their own approach, prioritize issues, and structure their response. It is designed to be time pressured, requiring candidates to manage competing demands and make thoughtful choices about where to focus their effort.

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard of candidates' performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions.

For the CPA Leadership Exam, candidates will be required to meet the following standards in order to pass this exam:

- Achieve sufficiency on the overall exam

The CPA Leadership Exam will be a disclosed exam.

Content Allocation

The following table summarizes the topic areas and the allocation of content assessed on the CPA Leadership Exam:

Specific Topic Area		**Allocation**
Area I	Assurance and Trust	0%-10%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	10%-20%
Area III	Ethical Decision-Making and Organizational Governance/Data Governance	15%-30%
Area IV	Finance	10%-20%
Area V	Financial Reporting	0%-10%
Area VI	Management Decision-Making and Information (Data) Systems/Technology	15%-30%
Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	0%-10%

Area VIII	Strategy, Risk Management, and Innovation	20%-35%
Area IX	Tax	0%-10%
Area X	Value Creation	*Integrated in other topics*

Reference Material

Candidates will have access to the following restricted reference materials while responding to the exam: the *CPA Canada Handbooks*, the *Income Tax Act*, and the *Excise Tax Act*.

CPA Professional Readiness Exam Blueprint (Professional Final Exam 3)

Exam Format

The CPA Professional Readiness Exam will consist of:

- One two-hour case focused on professional judgment
- One one-hour case focused on ethical decision-making

The two-hour case will require candidates to identify and evaluate the key issues facing the entity, then step back and assess what is appropriate to do under the circumstances. Specific technical topic areas may provide context but are not the focus. Candidates will not be required to perform complex calculations or detailed analyses; where needed, relevant detailed quantitative analysis will be provided for decision-making.

The one-hour case will be focused on navigating a complex ethical situation where there is no clear right answer.

In both cases, the settings will be complex and ambiguous, with multiple acceptable approaches, and the emphasis will be on candidates demonstrating their professional judgment and decision-making skills. The cases present decision opportunities with multiple impacts across an entity/entities where ethical considerations, public interest, and judgment are paramount, and technical analysis supports, rather than drives the decision. Full integration across all relevant competencies is required. These cases are not meant to be time pressured.

Candidates will be given three hours to complete the exam. Candidates are responsible for managing the time allocation between the two cases, since it will not be controlled as part of the exam.

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard for candidates’ performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions.

For the CPA Professional Readiness Exam, the cases will be marked holistically, and candidates will need to be assessed as a pass on each of the cases to pass this exam.

The CPA Professional Readiness Exam will be a non-disclosed exam.

Reference Material

Candidates will have access to the following restricted reference materials while responding to the exam: the *CPA Canada Handbooks*, the *Income Tax Act*, and the *Excise Tax Act*.

Knowledge Assessment Blueprint

The Knowledge Assessment is a way for candidates who do not meet the necessary entrance requirements for the CPA Professional Program to demonstrate that they have the prerequisite knowledge and competencies that will help them be successful in the program.

Exam Format

The Knowledge Assessment will consist of 150 objective-format questions. Objective format-questions may include, but are not limited to, multiple-choice, multiple-select, fill in the blank, and drop-down list questions.

Candidates will be given five hours to complete the exam (average of 2 minutes per mark).

Up to 10% of the questions will be pre-test questions. A pre-test question is an unscored item that is used to collect statistical performance data for future use.

Passing Standard

The Board of Examiners will set the passing standard for candidates' performance on the exam, considering the overall difficulty of the particular exam questions.

For the Knowledge Assessment, candidates will be required to meet the following standards in order to pass this exam and enter the program:

- Achieve sufficiency on each of 1) Financial Reporting and 2) Management Decision-Making and Information (Data) Systems/Technology
- Achieve sufficiency on the overall exam

The Knowledge Assessment is a non-disclosed exam.

Content Allocation

The Knowledge Assessment will consist of two parts, as follows:

Part A – Allocated 3 hours (90 objective-format questions)

Specific Topic Area		Allocation
Area I	Assurance and Trust	10%-15%
Area II	Big Data and Data Analytics	10%-15%
Area III	Ethical Decision-Making and Organizational Governance/Data Governance	10%-15%
Area IV	Finance	10%-15%

Area VII	Non-financial Reporting	10%-15%
Area VIII	Strategy, Risk Management, and Innovation	10%-15%
Area IX	Tax	10%-15%
Area X	Value Creation	*Integrated in other topics*
Foundational Competencies (Economics and the underlying areas of quantitative methods and probability, Law and Legal Forms of Business, Organizational Behaviour and Sustainability)		10%-15%

Part B – Allocated 2 hours (60 objective-format questions)

Specific Topic Area		Allocation
Area V	Financial Reporting	50%
Area VI	Management Decision-Making and Information (Data) Systems/Technology	50%

The time allocation for each part of the exam will be controlled (the time will be limited to three hours for Part A and two hours for Part B).

Reference Material

Candidates will not be provided with access to any reference materials while responding to the exam.

Appendix I – Definitions

Sufficiency: refers to a mark that meets or exceeds the minimum required threshold to pass, meaning the candidate has demonstrated an acceptable level of competency.

Complexity: refers to the degree of difficulty associated with the number and nature of interrelationships and ambiguities that must be considered simultaneously.

Low complexity: Little difficulty associated with a small number of straightforward and frequently encountered issues; may achieve competence relying on a “rote” approach.

Moderate complexity: Medium difficulty associated with a number of interconnections or variables that need to be considered simultaneously; circumstances may be less clear and require approaches that are not practiced frequently.

High complexity: Considerable difficulty associated with many interrelationships and ambiguities that must be considered simultaneously; often requires innovative approaches.