



VIRGINIA BOARD  
OF ACCOUNTANCY

# Education Handbook



This handbook includes education requirements to take the CPA exam and requirements needed for licensure as a CPA in Virginia.

*This revised Education Handbook is effective as of July 2023. Candidates can apply under the revised requirements or the prior education requirements up until June 30, 2025.*

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## **EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

The following requirements must be met to be eligible to take the CPA exam in Virginia.

Exam candidates must obtain from one or more accredited institutions:

- At least 120 semester hour credits of college education
- Baccalaureate or higher degree with an accounting concentration or equivalent

An accounting concentration or equivalent is comprised of:

- 24 semester hours of accounting courses: including courses in accounting information systems, auditing, financial accounting, and taxation (referred to as Core Accounting Courses)
- 24 semester hours of business courses: no more than six semester hours of VBOA accepted upper-level accounting courses can be included (must be in addition to the 24 semester hours of accounting courses above)

**Note 1:** No more than 3 semester hours of introductory/foundational accounting as determined by the VBOA is allowed toward the required accounting coursework. The course number or name does not always dictate whether a course is considered an introductory or foundational accounting course.

**Note 2:** Anyone who holds 1) a bachelor's degree in accounting or another VBOA approved business-related major and 2) a master's or more advanced degree in accounting, tax or accounting information systems from an accredited college or university or the equivalent thereof, will be deemed eligible to sit for the exam. 150 semester hours are required for ultimate licensure.

**Note 3:** The VBOA accepts courses for which quarter hours are earned. The semester hour equivalent can be calculated by dividing the total number of quarter hours by 1.5.

### **Core Accounting Courses**

#### Subjects

- Accounting Information Systems
- Auditing
- Financial Accounting
- Taxation



Examples of other accounting courses accepted toward the accounting requirement include, but are not limited to:

- Accounting Analytics
- Accounting Internship
- Accounting Seminar
- Accounting Theory
- Advanced Accounting
- Assurance Services
- Cost/Managerial Accounting
- Federal Taxation
- Forensic Accounting
- Fund Accounting
- Government Accounting and Reporting
- Government/Not-For-Profit Accounting
- Information Systems Assurance and Advisory
- Other accounting-centric courses with content areas included in the Uniform CPA Examination Blueprint as approved by the VBOA

Examples of courses accepted toward the business requirement in the subjects of Business Information Technology, Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing, and Statistics include, but are not limited to:

- Business Communications
- Business Law
- Commercial Law
- Data Analytics
- Financial Management
- Information Systems or Technology
- Insurance
- Investments
- Legal Environment of Business
- Organizational Behavior
- Quantitative Methods
- Other business-centric courses with content areas included in the Uniform CPA Examination Blueprint as approved by the VBOA

As previously stated, no more than six semester hours of VBOA accepted upper-level accounting courses can be considered business courses (must be in addition to the 24 semester hours of accounting courses above).

## **ACADEMIC CREDIT ALTERNATIVES**

The VBOA accepts credits awarded for internships and courses taken pass/fail provided that the associated course(s) are reflected on the transcript as earned credit from an accredited U.S. institution.

The VBOA does not accept the following for credit:

- Examination or experience alternatives not recognized by an accredited U.S. institution as academic credit
- Courses taken on an audit basis, not for academic credit
- Continuing education courses not granted academic credit
- Duplicate courses (i.e., credit is awarded only once for a course)
- Coursework deemed by the college to be remedial or below college level



## ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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The VBOA recognizes institutions accredited by one of the following accrediting agencies (or their successors):

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools: <https://www.msa-cess.org/>
- New England Commission of Higher Education: <https://www.neche.org/>
- Higher Learning Commission: <http://www.hlcommission.org>
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities: [www.nwccu.org](http://www.nwccu.org)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)
- WASC Senior College and University Commission: [www.acswasc.org](http://www.acswasc.org)
- Any organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA): [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)

If an accrediting organization is not listed above, it may be approved by the VBOA after it demonstrates that its accreditation process and standards are substantially equivalent to the accreditation process and standards of the above major regional accrediting organizations. The accrediting agency websites should list the accredited institutions. Contact the institution directly to determine if it is accredited through one of the recognized accrediting agencies. Many institutions list the accreditation on the back of their transcripts.

## NON-ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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The VBOA can approve a degree or coursework earned at a non-accredited institution if the degree or coursework is evaluated by an education evaluation firm and deemed equivalent to Virginia education requirements.

Additional information on approved education evaluation firms approved by the VBOA, as well as documentation requirements, may be found on the VBOA website at <https://boa.virginia.gov/cpa-exam/requirements/education-evaluation-firms>.

## COMBINED EDUCATION FROM ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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If the degree awarded by an accredited institution includes credits for courses taken at a non-accredited or international institution, those credits must be:

- Included for academic credit on the official transcript from the accredited institution where the degree was awarded  
or
- Evaluated for academic credit by one of the education evaluation firms approved by the VBOA



An accrediting organization may be approved by the VBOA after it demonstrates its accreditation process and standards are substantially equivalent to the accreditation process and standards of the major regional accrediting organizations.

## **INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

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Before the VBOA considers a degree or coursework earned outside the U.S., the individual must have the degree or coursework evaluated by an education evaluation firm approved by the VBOA to determine equivalency with Virginia education requirements.

## **DETERMINING EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS**

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The VBOA has developed the Education Self-Evaluation Worksheet to assist candidates in evaluating the education requirements needed to qualify for the CPA exam.

The Education Self-Evaluation Worksheet is attached to this handbook on page 7.

## **DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS (TRANSCRIPTS)**

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When applying to take the CPA exam, candidates must provide documentation of education qualifications to the VBOA in the form of:

- Official transcripts from each institution where the candidate earned credit hours toward the educational requirements  
and/or
- An original copy of the education evaluation report from an approved VBOA education evaluation firm, if applicable

For complete information on the CPA exam process, visit the VBOA website at <https://boa.virginia.gov/cpa-exam/apply/exam-application-steps>. The Exam Application Steps are attached to this handbook on page 10.



## LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

In order to become a licensed CPA in Virginia, an applicant must meet the 3 Es: education, exam and experience.

### Education

An applicant seeking licensure must provide documentation from one or more accredited institutions:

- At least 150 semester hour credits of college education
- A baccalaureate or higher degree with an accounting concentration or equivalent

The VBOA recommends applicants incorporate at least some graduate-level study of accounting in meeting the 150 semester hour requirement.

Although 150 semester hours of education are required to be licensed as a CPA in Virginia, 120 semester hours and an accounting concentration or the equivalent are the minimum requirements for an exam candidate to sit for any part of the CPA exam.

### Exam

An applicant must pass the CPA exam with a score of 75 or higher on each section, within a 30-month period, prior to applying for licensure.

### Experience

During the licensure application process, applicants are required to complete an [Experience Verification Form](#). The experience must be verified by an actively licensed CPA from any jurisdiction.

According to [§ 54.1-4400](#) of the Code of Virginia, the VBOA defines experience as an applicant being employed in academia, a firm, government, or industry in any capacity involving the substantial use of accounting, financial, tax or other skills that are relevant, as determined by the VBOA, to provide services to or on behalf of an employer or to the public as verified by an active, licensed CPA.

VBOA regulation 18VAC5-22-100 requires that, prior to applying for a license, a person must have been employed in academia, a firm, government, or industry in any capacity involving the substantial use of accounting, financial, tax, or other skills that are relevant, as determined by the board, to providing services to the public or to or on behalf of an employer for a period that is the full-time equivalent of one year. Whether other skills are relevant shall be determined by the board on a case-by-case basis. Self-employment does not meet this definition of experience.

**Note:** The applicant must complete at least 2,080 work hours or equivalent to one year of full-time employment. Whether other skills are relevant shall be determined by the VBOA on a case-by-case basis.

If a candidate applies for licensure in Virginia, has passed the CPA exam in a state other than Virginia and that state is considered substantially equivalent as defined in Code of Virginia § 54.1-4411, and obtained a minimum of 150 hours from one or more appropriately accredited institution(s), the VBOA's accounting concentration or equivalent requirement will be considered satisfied. Official transcripts and/or education evaluation will still need to be sent to verify the completion of the 150-hour requirement.

## CONTACT US

Virginia Board of Accountancy  
9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 402  
Henrico, Virginia 23233  
Email: [boa@boa.virginia.gov](mailto:boa@boa.virginia.gov)  
Phone: (804) 367-8505  
CPA examination services: (804) 367-1111  
Fax: (804) 527-4409  
Fax (enforcement/complaints): (804) 527-4207

**Enforcement Division**  
Email: [enforcement@boa.virginia.gov](mailto:enforcement@boa.virginia.gov)  
Fax (enforcement/complaints): (804) 527-4207

**Continuing professional education (CPE)**  
Email: [cpe@boa.virginia.gov](mailto:cpe@boa.virginia.gov)  
Phone: (804) 482-8757

## ATTACHMENTS

- Education Self-Evaluation Worksheet
- CPA Exam Application Steps
- Graduate Study Recommendation



## EDUCATION SELF-EVALUATION WORKSHEET

The Virginia Board of Accountancy (VBOA) has developed a resource to assist candidates in evaluating the education requirements needed to qualify for the CPA exam. The VBOA makes the final determination as to whether an exam candidate meets the education requirements.

**Note:** An education evaluation firm approved by the VBOA must evaluate a degree or coursework earned from non-accredited or international institutions to determine equivalency with Virginia education requirements.

Exam candidates must obtain from one or more accredited institutions:

- At least 120 semester hours of education
- Baccalaureate or higher degree with an accounting concentration or equivalent: No more than 3 semester hours of what can be considered introductory/foundational accounting is allowed toward the required accounting coursework of 24 semester hours.

The VBOA accepts courses for which quarter hours are earned. The semester hour equivalent can be calculated by dividing the total number of quarter hours by 1.5.

### Accounting courses

On a separate line, enter each course you completed and the associated academic credits received. The course number or name does not always dictate whether a course is considered an introductory or foundational accounting course. Contact the VBOA with any questions you may have.

Use the accounting course examples as a reference as you fill out your own worksheet.

### Core Accounting Courses

#### Subjects

- Accounting Information Systems
- Auditing
- Financial Accounting
- Taxation



Examples of other accounting courses accepted toward the accounting requirement include, but are not limited to:

- Accounting Analytics
- Accounting Internship
- Accounting Seminar
- Accounting Theory
- Advanced Accounting
- Assurance Services
- Cost/Managerial Accounting
- Federal Taxation
- Forensic Accounting
- Fund Accounting
- Government Accounting and Reporting
- Government/Not-For-Profit Accounting
- Information Systems Assurance and Advisory
- Other accounting-centric courses with content areas included in the Uniform CPA Examination Blueprint as approved by the VBOA

### Accounting Course Worksheet

| Institution | Accounting course/title          | Semester hours |
|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
|             | Accounting Information Systems*: |                |
|             | Auditing*:                       |                |
|             | Financial Accounting*:           |                |
|             | Taxation*:                       |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             |                                  |                |
|             | Total semester hours:            |                |

\*Required courses

**Business courses**

On a separate line below, enter each course you completed and the associated academic credits received. No more than 6 semester hours of VBOA accepted upper-level accounting courses can be considered relevant business courses (must be in addition to the 24 semester hours of accounting courses).

Examples of courses accepted toward the business requirement in the subjects of Business Information Technology, Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing, and Statistics include, but are not limited to:

- Business Communications
- Business Law
- Commercial Law
- Data Analytics
- Financial Management
- Information Systems or Technology
- Insurance
- Investments
- Legal Environment of Business
- Organizational Behavior
- Quantitative Methods
- Other business-centric courses with content areas included in the Uniform CPA Examination Blueprint as approved by the VBOA

**Business Course Worksheet**

| Institution           | Business course/title | Semester hours |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
|                       |                       |                |
| Total semester hours: |                       |                |

## CPA EXAM APPLICATION STEPS

The CPA examination process is a partnership between the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA), National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) and Prometric. Review the process for step-by-step instructions on applying for the CPA exam.

1. Register, create a user ID and password, and login to submit the initial application. The initial non-refundable application fee is \$120.



2. After submitting the application, send official transcripts to the Virginia Board of Accountancy at 9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 402, Henrico, VA 23233.



3. Processing takes approximately **two to three weeks** from the date transcripts are received. Once processing is complete, a determination of eligibility will be sent via email.



4. After being deemed eligible, exam candidates will receive the first payment coupon in the online NASBA Candidate portal within three to five business days. Exam candidates must login to their NASBA account to view the payment coupon. The payment coupon is valid for six months.



5. Once the payment coupon has been submitted, the exam candidate can view the Notice to Schedule (NTS) via the [NASBA Candidate portal](#). The NTS is valid for 12 months.



6. Upon accessing the NTS, the exam candidate will contact a Prometric Testing Facility to schedule the date to sit for the exam section. Visit the [Prometric website](#) and the online seat availability tool. It allows candidates to view seat availability for exam sections based on a preferred location without having a section ID.

## GRADUATE STUDY RECOMMENDATION

**Adopted October 24, 2008**

One of the Virginia Board of Accountancy's (VBOA) responsibilities is to establish minimum levels of education required to become licensed CPAs and to protect the public interest. Most states, including Virginia, now require a minimum of 150 semester hours of education and also specify a minimum number of semester hours in accounting courses and in business courses. The goal of these requirements is to assure an adequate depth of knowledge in accounting and business as well as adequate breadth in general education.

Some students may be able to meet all of these requirements via an intensive study of accounting and business during their undergraduate study. Others may pursue both undergraduate and graduate study in accounting. Still others may focus much of their study of accounting and business at the graduate level, having pursued an undergraduate major other than accounting. All of these strategies can fulfill the minimum educational requirements to become a licensed CPA.

The VBOA encourages students preparing to become licensed CPAs to elect courses wisely in meeting the requirement of 150 semester hours of education, such as courses that provide knowledge, skills and abilities that can assist them to become better accounting professionals. They should incorporate some graduate level study of accounting into their educational plans. The VBOA believes that the increased rigor and the strategic focus of graduate level courses can be valuable in preparing future accounting professionals to meet the increasing demands of the marketplace and to excel in the practice of public accounting.

The VBOA offers this recommendation as the shared opinion of its members, not as an official VBOA position. The formal educational requirements for licensure are specified in the Virginia accountancy statutes and in the related regulations, which can be found on the VBOA's website at [www.boa.virginia.gov](http://www.boa.virginia.gov).

The VBOA encourages students preparing to become licensed CPAs to stay updated about developments by reviewing the VBOA website regularly.

**Note:** As of March 2023, the VBOA continues to support the above recommendation. However, we acknowledge that, since its adoption date, all states require a minimum of 150 semester hours of education and an accounting concentration or equivalent and, as a result, are deemed substantially equivalent.



