ASCPA
Road to the CPA
Toolkit
Start Your Journey to Become a CPA

The Arizona Society of Certified Public Accountants — www.ascpa.com
What is a CPA?
Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) are accountants, but not all accountants are CPAs. A CPA is a professional who has met specific state and educational requirements, passed a rigorous exam and is licensed and regulated by the state. As such, it is a highly sought after designation.

Why Become a CPA?
The CPA is a “top certification” in high demand. Top five reasons to pursue the CPA include earning potential, career opportunities, stability, flexibility, as well as prestige and respect. (2019 Robert Half Accounting and Finance Salary Guide)

Career Opportunities
Being a CPA gives you the opportunity to work in different industries. As a CPA, your role may vary depending on the industry. Here is just a sample of some of the industries and specializations from which you may choose to work.

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<th>Industry</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
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<td>Business, both public/private</td>
<td>Audit</td>
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<td>Consulting</td>
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CPAs are hired by companies like Starbucks, Google and Target; and sports teams like the Arizona Cardinals and the Arizona Diamondbacks. Perhaps you would like to work for a local public accounting firm or maybe open your own practice.

As a CPA you may work for a nonprofit organization like Make-A-Wish or the Arizona Humane Society. Maybe you have always wanted to work for the FBI; nearly 1,400 of the FBI Special Agents are accountants!

The reality is that there is room for CPAs in any organization because their skills add value to every organization.

Road to the CPA — 1
Job Stability and Outlook

- 3.7% Current U.S. unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- 1.5% Unemployment rate among accountants & auditors (Robert Half Q2 2019 Report)
- 10% Projected growth in accounting jobs through 2026 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- 5% Annual average increase in starting salaries for U.S. accounting professionals (Journal of Accountancy)

CPA Salaries

According to the AICPA Journal of Accountancy, CPAs earn up to 15% more than accountants because they are licensed and regulated. The CPA designation gives CPAs an edge and allows them to charge more for their services.

The average salary of a CPA in the U.S. is $119,000 annually, excluding bonuses.

- Less than one year of experience earn an average salary of $66,000/yr.
- More than 20 years of experience earn an average salary of $152,000/yr.

Bonuses:
59% of CPAs work for employers that award bonuses. The average bonus amount is 10% of the annual salary. (Journal of Accountancy)

Desired Skills

- Critical and analytical thinking
- Complex problem-solving
- Technology, design and programming
- Active learning and cognitive flexibility
- Creativity, innovation and initiative
- Leadership and social influence
- Emotional intelligence and effective communication
- Systems analysis and evaluation
- Reasoning and decision making
- Ethical and professional
The 4 E’s to Becoming a CPA
There are four qualification components to become a CPA including: education, exam, ethics and experience. All of these components contribute to the licensing process.

Education
The Arizona State Board of Accountancy (ASBA, the Board) requires all who plan to take the CPA exam to have a baccalaureate or higher degree. All degrees must be from an accredited institution. There are different educational requirements depending on whether the individual is interested in a CPA Certificate or in obtaining a CPA License.

A CPA certificate means that you passed the CPA examination and fulfilled the minimum requirements to take it. A CPA license is issued when you complete all the requirements from a board of accountancy to become a CPA. Consequently, you are granted permission by the state to practice public accounting.

CPA Certificate
- Baccalaureate degree:
  - 24 accounting semester hours of non-duplicative accounting courses
  - 12 of 24 semester hours must be upper level courses
  - 18 semester hours of related courses*

CPA License
- 150-hour educational requirement:
  - Minimum 36 semester hours in accounting courses
  - 30 of 36 semester hours MUST be upper level courses
  - Minimum 30 semester hours in related courses*

*Related courses: Business administration, statistics, computer science (including information systems or data processing), economics, finance, management, business law, college algebra or more advanced mathematics, advanced written communication, advanced oral communication, ethics, marketing, or other courses closely related to the subject of accounting and satisfactory to the Board.

Official Transcripts
ASBA requires original and sealed official transcripts signed by the College or University Registrar’s Office.

For specific questions regarding educational requirements, please contact the Arizona State Board of Accountancy at (602) 364-0804 or visit www.azaccountancy.gov.
Exam
Once you have satisfied the educational requirements, you are eligible to apply for the Uniform CPA Examination.

Uniform CPA Exam Application Process
1. Apply to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy
   - Application Form (Only current forms are accepted.)
   - Official Transcripts
   - Fees: Initial Exam fee: $100; Re-Exam fee: $50.
     Make check payable to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy
     Note: Do not include exam section fees.

2. Board Issues an Authorization To Test (ATT)
   - The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) will send you a payment coupon (bill) for the sections you indicated on your application. Each exam section is $208.40.
   - You will have 90 calendar days to pay NASBA for the exam sections you requested.
     Note: Payments not received within the 90 days will cause you to reapply with the Board.

3. Notice to Schedule (NTS): Allows you to schedule a date to take the exam.
   - NASBA will issue a NTS after payment is received for your selected exam sections.
   - The NTS is only valid for six months.
     Note: Fees are nonrefundable. Be sure to plan ahead to ensure you’re able to take the exam sections you selected within a six-month period.

4. Schedule Testing with Prometric
   - The details on how to schedule are defined on the Notice to Schedule. Exams are offered the first two months of every quarter (January-February, April-May, July-August, October-November).

5. Scoring and Reporting
   - After the examination, candidate responses are forwarded to the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) for scoring. Once scored, the AICPA forwards them to NASBA for processing. Finally, NASBA will email the scores to those candidates who choose email as their contact preference. For those candidates who choose a mailing address as their contact preference, they will receive their scores via the mail from NASBA.
     Note: Selecting mail as your contact preference will delay the time in which you receive your scores. Find release dates by visiting the NASBA website at www.nsba.org.
Uniform CPA Exam
The exam is composed of four parts and each is four hours long.

Audit & Attestation (AUD)
72 multiple choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

Business Environments & Concepts (BEC)
62 multiple choice questions; 4 task-based simulations; 3 written communications

Financial Accounting & Reporting (FAR)
66 multiple choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

Regulation (REG)
76 multiple choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

Testing
- Passing score is 75 or higher
- After you pass the first section, you will have 18 months to pass the remaining sections before the first section taken expires. Example: If you pass AUD on 5/30/19, you must pass the other 3 sections by 11/30/2020 or your passage of AUD expires.
- The exam is scored by the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA)
- The results are released to you by NASBA
Ethics
You will need to take and pass the AICPA Ethics Exam. This exam is separate from the Uniform CPA Exam. You may purchase the ethics exam from the Arizona Society of CPAs by visiting: www.ascpa.com/become_a_cpa/ethics_exam

Ethics exam requirements:
- Must complete exam within one year from the date of purchase.
- Scores cannot be older than two years upon submission to ASBA.
- A score of 90% or higher is considered passing. This is an open book exam.
- You may take the ethics exam from your preferred location.
  
  Note: Because the ethics test scores expire, take this exam after you pass all four parts of the Uniform CPA Exam and after fulfilling the experience and other qualifications required by ASBA.

Experience
- You must complete 2,000 hours of paid or unpaid experience and have been exposed to and gained experience in the practice of accounting.
- You must submit a Certificate of Experience (COE) with your application packet.
- COE must be filled out by a CPA or an individual who has education and experience equivalent to a CPA. If the signer is not a CPA, they must attach a resume and a job description to verify their accounting education and experience is similar to that of a CPA.
  
  Note: You may acquire experience from more than one person. In that case, you will need to have a COE for each person. COE forms do not expire.

Other Qualifications
- Character and Fitness
- Proof of Citizenship/Residency
Certification Application Process
Once you have fulfilled all of the qualification components, you must submit an application packet to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy. Your packet will be reviewed to determine whether you’ve met the requirements for CPA certification.

1. Submit Application Packet and Pay Application Fee
Board receives application packet and the $100 application fee.

2. Staff Review
Within 30 days of receiving an application packet, ASBA notifies the applicant in writing that the application is either complete or incomplete.

   • If the application is incomplete, the letter will specify what information is missing.
   • If the application is complete, it will be forwarded to the next Certification Committee meeting for their review.

3. Committee Review
If all requirements are met, the Certification Committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Director to approve your application for certification.

4. Executive Director/Board Review
Committee recommendations for approval will be approved by the Executive Director, and you will be notified of the approval by U.S. mail. If the Committee recommends denial, your file will go before the Board to review the Committee’s recommendation and they will make a final decision.
Certification Tips and FAQs

- Be sure to evaluate college unofficial transcripts for duplicate course work. Remember that all official transcripts must be sealed.
- Board staff cannot evaluate official transcripts or certificates of experience before the receipt of an application.
- Do not submit incomplete or outdated forms! This will delay the process.
- Board staff can answer general questions about statutes and rules.
- When can I reapply for a section of the exam?
  You may reapply if either of these situations has occurred:
  Notice to Schedule (NTS) has expired, or the section you want to reapply for has been scored and your score was less than 75.
  Note: If you submit a re-exam application before either of these conditions has been met, you will risk having your application canceled and the $50 application fee forfeited.
- Who are these organizations? How will I interact with them?

**Arizona State Board of Accountancy (ASBA)**
Regulatory Board for all CPAs and CPA candidates.
*Grants authorization to take the CPA examination, provides score reports, determines and approves eligibility for CPA certification.*

**National Association of State Board of Accountancy (NASBA)**
Association for state boards; promotes uniformity across the country to facilitate interstate practice.
*To whom you pay exam fees and from whom you receive Notice to Schedule (NTS).*
*Sends your test scores to ASBA.*

**American Institute of CPAs (AICPA)**
World’s largest member association representing CPAs.
*Generates and scores the Uniform CPA Exam.*

**Prometric**
Computer-based test center.
*You will schedule and take the exam at one of their testing centers.*

**Arizona Society of CPAs (ASCPA)**
Arizona’s leading professional CPA organization.
*From whom you purchase the ethics exam.*
*The ASCPA provides its members with benefits that are essential to their development and enrich their practice.*
*Benefits include: continuing education discounts, development of leadership and relationship skills, providing relevant information concerning the profession and advocating for the interests and integrity of Arizona CPAs.*
Arizona Society of Certified Public Accountants

As a student:
- We provide education and guidance about becoming a CPA.
- We make scholarships available for college and high school students.

As a CPA professional:
- We provide CPAs and other professionals with continuing professional education.
- We offer leadership development opportunities throughout your career, with a separate series offered to Emerging Leaders.
- Receive resources to connect with others in the CPA profession.

As a community leader:
- We provide opportunities to build relationships and foster member engagement.
- We advocate for the profession with state and national legislative bodies.
- We encourage students to pursue the CPA designation.

ASCPA Vision: The ASCPA is essential to all CPAs in Arizona.

Mission: We enhance the success of our members and lead our profession.

Fulfill our Mission Through: Education, Image, Advocacy

Scholarship Opportunities

The Arizona CPA Foundation for Education and Innovation awards scholarships to high school seniors and university students pursuing an education in accounting in Arizona. These scholarships are available thanks to the generous contributions from the CPA member community.

Applications are available in late October each year. See www.ascpa.com/scholarships for more details.
Additional Resources

Arizona State Board of Accountancy – www.azaccountancy.gov
- Uniform CPA Exam Initial Application Form*
- Transcript Request Form*
*These and other forms may be found at the Arizona State Board of Accountancy website.

Arizona Society of CPAs (ASCPA) – www.ascpa.com
- Ethics Exam
- Leadership and Social Influence

American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) – www.aicpa.org
- Uniform CPA Examination Blueprints: This is an exam outline; you may use this tool to assist you with exam preparation.
- Learn more about why you should become a CPA by visiting www.thiswaytocpa.com.

National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) – www.nasba.org

Prometric – www.prometric.com