



ascpa[®]
Arizona Society of CPAs

Road to the CPA **TOOLKIT**

Published by the
Arizona Society of CPAs
www.ascpa.com

In This Toolkit

Why Should I Become a CPA?

page 3

What does it mean to be a Certified Public Accountant, and how can the designation unlock new paths in your career? Learn about the employment and advancement opportunities, the career's outlook, the salary you can expect and the desired skillset.

How Do I Become a CPA?

page 4

The process of becoming a CPA can be summed up with the 4 E's: education, exam, ethics and experience.

Application Process

page 7

Understand some useful tips and what to expect from your journey, from submitting the application to the executive director and board review.

Organizations to Know

page 8

There are many organizations that can help you on the road to the CPA. Also, learn about membership perks and scholarships at the ASCPA.

Additional Resources

page 10

Questions? Here's where to get started.



What is a CPA?

Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) are accountants, but not all accountants are CPAs. A CPA meets specific state and educational requirements, passes a rigorous exam and is

licensed and regulated by the state. Obtaining the CPA designation proves that you have mastered critical elements of the profession with years of academic and technical training.

Why Should I Become a CPA?

"CPAs are instrumental in guiding businesses to improve cashflow and navigate an uncertain future."

2021 Robert Half Accounting and Finance Salary Guide

CPAs are masters at analyzing information and can pick up on hidden patterns to put together financial puzzles.

Your work as a CPA is essential for the business world and your community. Therefore, becoming a CPA will increase your earning potential and career opportunities. You will enjoy greater career stability and flexibility, as well as earning prestige and respect. As a CPA, you can pursue highly specialized jobs, work with multi-talented people and even travel internationally.

Employment Opportunities

Every business runs on financial transactions, so a degree in accounting can take you into the industry of your choice. As a result, your role may vary depending on the field. Here are some of the industries and specializations from which you can choose to work.

- Business (public/private)
- Consulting
- Corporate
- Education
- Audit
- Business valuation
- Financial planning
- Forensic accounting
- Information technology
- Government
- Nonprofit
- Self-employment
- Managerial
- Tax

CPAs are hired by companies such as Starbucks, Google and Target; and sports teams such as the Arizona Cardinals and the Phoenix Suns. Perhaps you would like to work for a government agency, a local public accounting firm or open your own practice. As a CPA you may also work for a nonprofit

organization such as 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 you will find CPAs in any organization, because their skills add value to every organization.

Job Stability & Outlook

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

6%

projected employment growth in accounting and auditing through 2031.

- Accountants and auditors as CPAs have the best job prospects.
- The demand for accountants and auditors grows with globalization, economic growth and complex tax and regulatory environments.
- Technological changes such as the automation of routine tasks will allow accountants to become more efficient. This is not expected to reduce demand for these roles, but it will increase the need for the advisory and analytical skills of accountants.



Salary

According to the AICPA Journal of Accountancy, CPAs earn up to 15% more than accountants because they are licensed and regulated, allowing them to charge more for their services. Starting salaries vary by market, as adjusted

for cost of living and availability of talent. For example, salaries in Phoenix are 10% higher than the national average according to the Robert Half 2023 Salary Guide .

	0-3 Years	Senior	Manager
Corporate Accounting Tax	\$67,650-\$99,257	\$87,175-\$123,200	\$110,825-\$152,625
Public Accounting Tax	\$56,375-\$80,025	\$71,775-\$99,550	\$102,025-\$144,100
Corporate Accounting Audit	\$53,350-\$102,575	\$89,375-\$126,225	\$115,500-\$165,00
Public Accounting Audit/ Assurance	\$53,350-\$75,625	\$62,975-\$90,200 (Sr. Associate)	\$88,000-\$125,400 (Manager of Audit)

*2022 Robert Half Salary Calculator Average Salaries in Phoenix, Arizona

Desired Skills

Technology

- Cloud-based payroll and human resource information systems
- Data analytics, protection and privacy
- Electronic health records
- ERP systems
- Excel (advanced)
- Financial modeling and forecasting
- QuickBooks (for smaller businesses)

Soft Skills

- Ability to work independently, in virtual teams
- Attention to detail
- Comfortable with change
- Commitment to continual learning
- Creativity and innovation
- Customer service
- Problem solving
- Writing and verbal skills



How Do I Become a CPA? | The Four Es

There are four qualification components to become a CPA, which contribute to the licensing process: education, exam, ethics and experience.

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 from an accredited institution. The educational requirements differ depending on your interest in a CPA Certificate or in obtaining a CPA License.

CPA Certificate

Definition You passed the CPA examination and fulfilled the minimum requirements to take it.

Education Baccalaureate degree, including 24 non-duplicative semester hours of accounting, including 12 hours of non-duplicative upper-level coursework and 18 hours of related courses*.

CPA License

You completed all of a board of accountancy's requirements to become a CPA. The state grants you permission to practice public accounting.

150-hour education requirement, including at least 36 semester hours in accounting courses. This must include 30 semester hours of upper-level courses and 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, general ethics, marketing and other courses that are closely related to the subject of accounting or that are satisfactory to the Board.

ASBA requires you fill out the Transcript Request Form and send a copy to each college or university you attended to obtain your degree(s) and your required courses. The transcript(s) sent to you must remain in the sealed envelope.

If electronic transcripts are available by the college or university, you may request the school to send the official electronic transcripts directly to the Board through email to info@azaccountancy.gov.

Helpful Hint

Request an additional unofficial copy in a separate envelope for your records to ensure that your degree and all credits have been recorded.

For specific questions regarding educational requirements, 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. Here is the Uniform CPA Exam Application Process:

1

Apply to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy

You will need the application form (only current forms accepted) and your official transcripts.

- Initial exam fee: \$100 | Re-exam fee: \$50
- Make check payable to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy

Note: Does not include exam section fees.

2

Committee Review and Executive Director/Board Review

Your application and transcripts will be reviewed by the Board's Advisory Certification Committee. If all requirements are met, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Director to approve your application for the Uniform CPA Exam.

The Board generally meets monthly, except for April and October.

3

Board Issues an Authorization to Test (ATT)

After the Board's Executive Director's approval, Board staff will electronically submit the ATT to the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA). NASBA will send you an invoice "payment coupon" (bill) for the sections you indicated on your application. As of August 2022, each exam section is \$238.15.

You will have 90 days to pay NASBA for the exam sections you requested. Note: Payments not received within the 90 days will cause the payment coupon to expire and you will have to reapply with the Board.



4

Notice to Schedule

NASBA will issue a NTS after payment is received for your selected exam sections. The NTS is only valid for six months. If you fail to take all or any section of the exam listed on the NTS during the six months, those sections will expire with the NTS.

When can I reapply for a section of the exam?

You may reapply if your NTS has expired, or the section has been scored 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.

5

Schedule Testing with Prometric

To book a location and a testing time visit proscheduler.prometric.com.

6

Receive Your Scores from NASBA

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 emails or mails the scores to candidates, depending on your preference indicated.

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.nasba.org.

Uniform CPA Exam

The exam is composed of four parts, and each section is four hours long.

Audit & Attestation (AUD)

72 multiple-choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

Financial Accounting & Reporting (FAR)

66 multiple-choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

Business Environments & Concepts (BEC)

62 multiple-choice questions; 4 task-based simulations; 3 written communications

Regulations (REG)

76 multiple-choice questions; 8 task-based simulations

A passing score is 75 or higher on each part. After you pass the first section, you will have 18 months to pass the remaining sections before the first section taken expires.

- For example, if you pass AUD on 5/30/21, you must pass the other three sections by 11/30/2022, or your passage of AUD expires.

Test Changes

A new model for licensure and a new CPA Exam is expected to launch in January 2024.

The model includes a robust core of accounting, audit, tax and technology that candidates need to master. Then, each candidate would need to demonstrate deeper knowledge in a discipline, one of three primary pillars of the profession.

Business analysis & reporting **Information systems & controls** **Tax compliance & planning**

Ethics

You will need to take and pass the AICPA Ethics Exam, which is open-book and online. 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 the 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.

Note: Because the ethics test scores expire, take this exam after passing 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 accounting experience.
- You must submit a Certificate of Experience (COE) from each of your supervisors. COE forms do not expire, but they must be filled out by a CPA or an individual with the 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 they are able to oversee a potential CPA candidate. The job description should verify the experience on the COE.
- Other qualifications are: character and fitness; and, proof of citizenship/residency

Application Process

Once you have fulfilled the qualification components, you must submit an application packet to the Arizona State Board of Accountancy. Your packet will be reviewed to determine if you meet the requirements for CPA certification.

- 1. Submit Application** The Board receives your application packet and the \$100 application fee.
- 2. Staff Review** Within 30 days of receiving an application packet, the Board notifies the applicant that the application is either complete or incomplete.
 - If incomplete, an incomplete notice will specify what is missing.
 - If complete, it will be placed on the agenda of the next Certification Committee meeting.
- 3. Committee Review** The Certification Committee meets monthly. When your application is complete, the Committee reviews your application to ensure that you meet the certification requirements.
- 4. Executive Director/ Board Review** Committee recommendations for approval will be granted 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.



Evaluate unofficial college transcripts for duplicate courses. Remember: all transcripts must be sealed.



Board staff cannot review official transcripts or certificates of experience before receipt of application.



Do not submit incomplete forms! Doing so will delay the process.



Board staff can answer general questions about statutes and rules.

Organizations You Should Know



**Arizona State Board
of Accountancy**

The regulatory Board for all Arizona CPAs and CPA candidates. It grants authorization to take the CPA examination, provides score reports and determines and approves eligibility for CPA certification. Find the Uniform CPA Exam Initial Application Form and Transcript Request Form on its website.



Association for state boards; promotes uniformity across the country to facilitate interstate practice. You will pay your exam fees to this association. It sends Notice to Schedule to you and will send your test scores to ASBA.



World's largest member association representing CPAs. Generates and scores the Uniform CPA Exam.



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



The leading organization for CPAs in Arizona. Helps members maximize their potential through advocacy, connections and education. You may join this organization as a student, candidate or CPA.





The Arizona Society of CPAs

As the leading organization for CPAs in Arizona, the ASCPA helps members maximize their potential. The ASCPA is an ally in development, education and advocacy for students, for CPAs and the for the public.

For Students

- We educate and guide the process of becoming a CPA.
- We make scholarships available for college and high school students.
- We provide opportunities to engage with the CPA community to learn about the profession.

For CPAs

- We provide continuing professional education to help members grow and to understand complex changes in the profession.
- We develop leaders through opportunities.
- We connect members within the Arizona CPA community.

For the Public

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



Scholarships

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.

Visit www.ascpa.com/scholarships for more details.



Additional Resources

Arizona Society of CPAs (ASCPA) – www.ascpa.com

- Order your ethics exam: www.ascpa.com/ethicsexam
- As a member, you can connect with colleagues in the CPA profession: www.ascpa.com/engage/connect_with_colleagues

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

CPA Evolution – www.evolutionofcpa.org

- Learn more about the new model for licensure and the new CPA Exam expected to launch in January of 2024.