



Operations Update: Capitalizing on Change

by Michael Decker, Director of Operations and Development

I recently attended the 2011 CPE Conference and was inspired by its theme: *Capitalize on Momentum to Create Change*. I'd like to share my thoughts about how this theme relates to the Uniform CPA Examination and to the Examinations Team.

Creating Change, Improving Service

The recent success of the CBT-e release exemplifies the Examinations Team's ability to develop and deploy new item types, new content (IFRS, for example), a new and improved score report and Sample Test, a new internal system that hosts the exam content, and an updated streamlined approach that will provide faster score reporting to candidates by the end of 2011.

In the past few years, we have worked very hard to improve our communications with NASBA, the State Boards, Prometric, the Board of Examiners, our Committees and Subcommittees, the Review Course Providers, and most importantly, the candidates. Our improved communications have enabled us to work hand-in-hand with our partners and better understand the needs of our constituents.

Generating Momentum

Following the successful launch of CBT-e, we are pushing forward with international administration of the examination to meet global demand, keeping the Examination current amid significant changes to accounting standards and the profession, and implementing changes of our own to improve the development and administration of the Examination.

Taking the Examination global requires the Examinations Team to develop additional content, provide greater scoring forensics, release more examination forms, and communicate to an even larger base of constituents. The significant changes to the profession, including the Clarity project, Convergence, and Private Company/US GAAP changes require us to develop additional content more quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively—all without compromising the quality that has made the Uniform CPA Examination a model in the high-stakes testing industry.

The experience gained these past few years, coupled with the stronger relationships developed with our constituents, provide us with incredible positive momentum as we face the future.

Embracing Change

Change is inevitable. We have seen the accounting profession change and we've seen the rate of change increase. It's up to us to understand that change, accept it, and learn to take advantage of it.

I'm both comforted and energized by the fact that together with our partners, we have strengthened our relationships and generated the positive momentum we need to successfully meet the needs of this changing profession. I hope you are as excited about the future as I am.

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Moving the Exams Team to Meet the Times

In the summer of 2011 the Exams team is moving to a new state-of-the-art facility. The new building provides the modern infrastructure and security we need to develop the CPA Exam in this era of constant technological and professional change.

International Exam Update: Eligibility

Recently, the AICPA, NASBA, and Prometric announced the August 1, 2011 launch date for international administration of the Uniform CPA Exam at test centers in Bahrain, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates. In response, candidates living in those countries and in neighboring regions have asked for more details—especially regarding eligibility to test. So let’s take a closer look at international exam eligibility.

Who can test?

While candidate eligibility will be determined according to the [same criteria as with the US Exam](#), there are additional residency requirements for international examinees. In all five of the selected testing countries, citizens and long-term residents of those countries, and US citizens residing or traveling abroad, can sit for the Exam. In the four Middle East locations, eligibility is extended to citizens and long-term residents of Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

Note that candidates will be asked to provide proof of residency to NASBA before testing, and will have to show acceptable identification materials on the day of the test. A list of those materials will be released in the coming months, but in general, passports for citizens and a form of ID showing proof of residency status for non-citizens will be required.

Put another way, here are some basic guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Japan

- a. Eligible candidates: US citizens, citizens of Japan, long-term residents
- b. ID Required: Passport for citizens, passport plus valid Japanese ID (ex: driver’s license, Alien Registration Certificate) providing proof of residence for non-citizens

2. Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates

- a. Eligible candidates: US citizens, citizens of these four testing countries, long-term residents
- b. ID Required: Passport for citizens, Passport plus valid national ID providing proof of residency for non-citizens

3. Middle East Extended Eligibility (for testing at locations in Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates)

- a. Eligible candidates: Citizens and long-term residents of Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia
- b. ID Required: Passport for citizens, Passport plus valid national ID providing proof of residency for non-citizens

Tourist, Short-term visitor, or Transit Visas

Without exception, candidates who do not meet the residency guidelines above will not be eligible to sit for the Exam internationally. Candidates who live in neighboring regions and can easily obtain short-term visitor, tourist, or transit visas are likewise ineligible to test.

But that doesn’t mean that candidates who otherwise meet their state board eligibility requirements are unable to take the Exam. As before, these qualified candidates can sit for the Exam at any Prometric test center within US jurisdictions.

Higher Security and the Privilege of Testing Internationally

You might ask why we added additional levels of security, and indeed some candidates have expressed concern that even if they meet all of the state board requirements they’re still unable to test closer to home. We can offer several reasons.

The Uniform CPA Examination is a high-stakes exam that safeguards the public interest. The Exam helps state boards of accountancy to ensure that those entering the CPA profession can be entrusted with a certain level of legal authority. As providers of the Exam, the AICPA, NASBA, and Prometric must therefore make sure the Exam itself is secure. Controlling testing populations in these new locations at the outset helps maintain the integrity of the Exam.

Another reason is that we have never offered the Exam internationally before, and offering testing in non-US locations is, to some extent, a brand new venture. By expanding slowly and maintaining a smaller candidate pool, we can maintain Exam quality on the one hand, and closely monitor candidate feedback and performance on the other. These steps protect the worldwide candidate population. As we gain familiarity with international administrations, and any unique issues that may arise, we will be in a better position to consider expanding the program.

Check Out the International FAQs

For more information about international administration of the Exam, download the [International Administration Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)

Milestones for International CPA Exam Administration in 2011

May: States accept requests for international testing

August: First CPA Exams administered at international locations

November: First scores released for internationally administered CPA Exams

Understanding the 2011 Score Release Timeline

As you may know, scores for the first three testing windows of 2011 will be released to NASBA after the close of the testing window. It is important to note that scores are not being held until the end of the window. Rather, the magnitude of changes introduced by CBT-e require extra analysis to verify that questions accurately capture candidate performance, and ensure that only qualified candidates enter the CPA profession. Additionally, this analysis will enable scores to be released faster and more predictably starting with the fourth testing window of 2011.

The transition to Task-based Simulations (TBS) in CBT-e, from the “classic simulations” used on the CPA Exam before January 2011, is a key component of the faster score release timeline in the fourth testing window of 2011. The primary benefit a TBS has over simulations used previously on the CPA Exam is the ability to be pre-tested. Pre-testing allows us to gather candidate and question performance data, as we have done with multiple-choice questions (MCQs): once we have enough statistical data, we will be able to score TBSs as quickly as we score MCQs.

Data from a full testing window are required in order to properly analyze the performance of the TBS questions. As a result, score releases for the first three quarters in 2011 had to be delayed until after the close of the testing window.

Beginning in October 2011, the analyses will be complete and scores will be released on an accelerated—and, for the most part, predictable—timeline. Candidates can expect the first score release near the beginning of the second month of the window, and subsequent releases approximately every two weeks for the remainder of the window. In other words, the first release will be earlier than before, and scores will be released four times per window, an improvement over the previous two-wave system.

The issue of a faster and more predictable score release schedule has been a common theme in feedback received by candidates. Starting in October 2011, candidates who test at the same time can expect to get their results at or around the same time, regardless of which section is taken (BEC scores might be delayed by one wave for additional scoring of written responses). For example, if you take AUD in the first week of October, and your colleague takes REG on the same day, you will both receive your scores at approximately the same time, at the beginning of November.

A [2011 Score Release Timeline FAQ](#) is available in the Psychometrics and Scoring section of the CPA Exam website (www.aicpa.org/cpa-exam).

A Brief Look at Scoring in CBT-e

While the changes introduced by CBT-e have not altered the fundamental method for scoring the CPA Exam, differences have been captured in a recent update to the paper, *How is the CPA Exam Scored?*, now available on the CPA Exam website (www.aicpa.org/cpa-exam). The paper provides a nuts and bolts overview of scoring on the CPA Exam, including pre-test questions, adaptive multiple-choice question testlets, and the methods behind the 75 passing score.

From a candidate’s perspective the most visible differences in CBT-e are changes to section length, content weights/distribution, and migration of all written communication to the BEC section.

Less visible to the candidate is the introduction of multi-stage adaptive testing for the multiple

choice question (MCQ) testlets in the BEC section. Now, all MCQs on the CPA Exam use the multi-stage adaptive testing model, in which testlets can vary in overall difficulty, based on a candidate’s performance on previous testlets. Multi-stage adaptive testing makes it possible to assess performance with fewer questions by eliminating some questions that are too easy or too hard for a given proficiency level, and ensuring that the remaining questions more closely match that proficiency level.

For a complete overview of scoring on the CPA Exam, visit the CPA Exam website and check out the paper, *How is the CPA Exam Scored?*, found in the Psychometrics and Scoring section.

About Pre-test Questions on the CPA Exam

The use of pre-test questions is an integral part of our procedures to ensure that questions on the CPA Exam accurately and reliably assess the performance of candidates seeking to enter the CPA profession. More information about the application of pretest questions on the CPA Exam is available in the paper, [How is the CPA Exam Scored?](#)

A Quick Guide to the 2011 Score Releases

1101 March Single Score Release

1102 June Single Score Release

1103 September Single Score Release

1104 First wave at the end of October, followed by score releases every two weeks for the remainder of the window

Making the Most of the Candidate Performance Report

As part of our effort to improve the candidate experience with the CPA Exam, the Candidate Performance Report has been revised so that the feedback is more helpful for candidates seeking to identify areas in their exam performance that require improvement. A new [Candidate Performance Report FAQ](#) and [sample reports](#) are now available on the CPA Examination website. Some state boards of accountancy circulate customized variations of the Candidate Performance Report, so the sample reports could be different from the format used by your state board.

Feedback on the revised Candidate Performance Report is organized into two tables. The first table lists the content areas specified in the CPA Examination Content Specification Outlines (CSOs), and reports performance on the multiple-choice questions. The second table reports performance

based upon question type: multiple-choice questions and task-based simulations (AUD, FAR and REG), and multiple-choice questions and written communication questions (BEC).

The scale used on the Candidate Performance Report is divided into three categories; stronger, weaker, and comparable, and is based upon the performance of candidates who earned a reported score between 75 and 80. Since the purpose of the Candidate Performance Report is to help candidates pass the Exam, providing performance from candidates who “just passed” the Exam (having earned scores between 75 and 80) offers the best comparison to identify content areas that require improvement.

The new reports started distribution with the first CBT-e score release in March 2011.

Interested in Volunteering?

If you are a subject matter expert and are interested in volunteering for these or any other Board of Examiners committees, please visit Volunteer Central on the AICPA website at <http://www.aicpa.org/Volunteer/Pages/Volunteer.aspx>, or contact us directly at VolunteerServices@aicpa.org.

Spotlight on Volunteers

Spotlight on Volunteers is a recurring Uniform CPA Examination Alert feature, highlighting the efforts and contributions of selected members of our all-volunteer subcommittees. These four subcommittees – each corresponding to one section of the Exam – meet regularly to review and revise prospective Exam questions, and to ensure that the content on the Exam reflects the knowledge and skills requirements for entry-level CPAs.

In our previous (and inaugural) Spotlight feature, we visited with volunteers from the FAR subcommittee. For our second installment, we turn to the AUD subcommittee. We visited with Mari DeVries, owner of DeVries CPAs of Arizona, and Lance Mann, Manager at Dean Dorton Allen Ford, PLLC, both volunteers in their third year. Let's learn why they each spend over 200 hours per year performing their subcommittee duties.

Mari DeVries

On Motivation

Like many of our volunteers, Mari is motivated by her desire to “make a difference in our profession.” She also gets satisfaction from helping people “to be better at what they do.” Working on the subcommittees allows her to fulfill both of these core motivations, and more.

On the Challenges of Subcommittee Work

Mari says that the pace of change in the auditing field presents worthy challenges to her work on the AUD subcommittee. But at the same time, she says that it is “so rewarding to know that our hard work is keeping the exam fresh and relevant.”

On Accomplishment

“In 2010,” Mari says, “our audit subcommittee reviewed over 1400 multiple-choice exam questions,” an incredible accomplishment in such a short amount of time. She adds that reaching that volume was possible because the AUD committee “is a hard-working bunch, but we still managed to laugh a lot and have fun.”

On being a successful volunteer

Success on the AUD subcommittee requires thorough preparation for “every meeting and conference call,” according to Mari. She adds that since the group moves through questions at a fast pace, reviewing every question ahead of time is of critical importance.

Advice for Exam candidates

Mari says that she finds most new candidates “intimidated by the sheer scope of the Exam.” Her advice? Candidates should simply take one section

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Spotlight on Volunteers (continued from page 4)

and “they will see that it’s not that bad.” Her sense of humor soon gets the best of her, however, as she continues, “then I laugh and give that “I also have a bridge I could sell you” smile.”

Attracting the Under-36 crowd to volunteering

Mari thinks younger volunteers have much to offer the Exam and should consider giving subcommittee work a try. She points out that young professionals “are working directly with the CPA candidates in their firms,” and thus can help the Exam stay relevant to entry-level CPA assessment.

Lance Mann

On Motivation

Lance’s motivation comes from the “pursuit of knowledge and excellence” inherent in subcommittee work, and the experiences of his colleagues and mentors. “It is humbling to know that even partners and directors who have been working in public accounting for 20 years still seem to learn something new every day,” he says, adding that “it gives hope of a long and rewarding career path.”

On the challenges and rewards of subcommittee work

For Lance, the challenge of subcommittee work is one of achieving the highest testing standards. “We want to provide the best possible Exam to candidates to both challenge them to think analytically while still testing their knowledge base,” he says. His rewards come from sharing knowledge with, and learning from, a diverse team of professionals.

On Volunteering and Career Advancement

Giving back to the profession is one way to show your dedication to your career, according to Lance. “Volunteering with the AICPA shows my company that I am invested in my professional development and in the CPA profession.”

On Being a Successful Volunteer

For Lance, successful volunteers are those who can contribute to the team in an active, vocal manner. In his experience, committee members who are too quiet may not be contributing to the team. He says, “I think one of the key qualities is to tell everyone what you think of a specific subject. They may not agree with you all of the time but at least they know where you stand.”

Advice for Exam Candidates

Candidates “should focus more on learning than on memorizing,” Lance says, as “the exam is designed to make you apply the knowledge you have rather than to recite something you have memorized.” He adds that the Exam is structured this way because the CPA career path is a dynamic one, where situations vary day to day.

Attracting the Under-36 crowd to volunteering

Lance thinks that ongoing and significant changes to the profession serve as a rallying call to young CPAs, looking to take charge of their careers. Working on the subcommittees gives young CPAs a chance to contribute to the profession and become its caretakers. As he says, “a big part of our career is the AICPA...we should be a part of molding its future.”

This Way to CPA: AICPA Launches New Career Web Site for Future CPAs

The accounting profession stands as a beacon of success and growth even as the storm clouds of economic uncertainty continue to cover many professions in the U.S. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the accounting profession is positioned to grow by 22 percent between 2008 and 2018, with an anticipated 279,400 new jobs in the field by 2018. Current and future accounting career opportunities are strong and to help guide students in their pursuit of accounting careers, the AICPA has launched ThisWayToCPA.com. This new website is devoted exclusively to the needs of college

students interested in becoming CPAs and graduates preparing for the CPA examination, and both NASBA and the AICPA Examinations team collaborate on the Exam and licensure-related sections.

New Career Web Resource

With the most-timely, relevant and practical career insights, career planning resources, study strategies and social networking opportunities, ThisWayToCPA.com provides visitors a dynamic, interactive learning experience. The result is the premier, go-to destination for future CPAs.

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This Way to CPA: AICPA Launches New Career Web Site for Future CPAs *(continued from page 5)*

For Exam candidates, ThisWayToCPA.com offers a one-stop information portal, full of features that help visitors understand how the Exam fits into their accounting career. State Boards of Accountancy can also count on support from the site's thorough state-by-state licensure requirements guides. Among the many features available on the site, those of particular interest to Exam candidates and state boards include:

- *Community*, a forum where students and exam candidates can share their thoughts and experiences concerning the CPA exam and licensure, careers and internships, college and graduate school, and achievements and challenges.
- *State Map*, an interactive page that offers details on becoming a CPA in each of the 50 states and U.S. territories, including information on exam and state-licensure requirements, residency, number of hours of education and experience, academic degree, age and ethics. It also explains how international candidates can earn a CPA license. In addition, students can find contact information for state CPA societies and boards of accountancy.

- *Exam and Licensure Timeline and Utility*, a realistic view of the typical exam preparation and licensure process as well as an interactive tool that visitors can use to predict when they might complete the CPA exam.
- *Find Your Fit*, an interactive tool that helps place students on the path to their desired career after graduation and completion of the CPA exam.

Other site sections feature videos where visitors can perfect their interviewing skills with an experienced accounting professional, and obtain an up-close and personal look into the daily lives of new CPAs across industry and specialty areas. ThisWayToCPA.com also shares with visitors insights into the study and exam-planning strategies, and test scores, of newly licensed CPAs. Each week day, the site features Daily Words of Wisdom, humorous yet insightful phrases that are linked to related site content ranging from salaries to CPA exam preparation.

To learn more about ThisWayToCPA.com, visit the website at www.thiswaytocpa.com, or send an email to thiswaytocpa@aicpa.org.

Becoming a CPA

Are you aware of some of the online resources available to help those who wish to enter the profession? Here are just a few:

- **Start Here, Go Places:** for interested high school students. <http://www.startheregoplaces.com>
- **ThisWaytoCPA:** for interested university students and young accounting professionals. <http://www.thiswaytocpa.com>
- **AICPA.org – Become a CPA:** for anyone starting out in the profession or interested in becoming a CPA. <http://www.aicpa.org/BECOMEACPA/Pages/BecomeaCPA.aspx>
- **NASBA.org:** The official website of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, for those about to take the Exam or already in process: <http://www.nasba.org>

The Uniform CPA Examination is developed and administered through the coordinated efforts of the AICPA, Prometric, and NASBA.



About the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)

The AICPA is the national, professional association of CPAs, with more than 360,000 CPA members worldwide. The AICPA sets ethical standards for the profession and U.S. auditing standards for audits of private companies, non-profit organizations, federal, state and local governments. It develops and grades the Uniform CPA Examination.



About the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA)

NASBA serves as a forum for U.S. state boards of accountancy, which administer the Uniform CPA Examination, license more than 600,000 certified public accountants and regulate the practice of public accountancy in the U.S. NASBA's mission is to enhance the effectiveness of state boards of accountancy in meeting their regulatory responsibilities.



About Prometric

Prometric, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ETS, is the recognized global leader in technology-enabled testing and assessment services. Its comprehensive suite of services, including test development, test delivery and data management capabilities, allows clients to develop and launch global testing programs as well as accurately measure program results and data. Prometric reliably delivers and administers more than seven million tests a year on behalf of 450 clients in the academic, professional, healthcare, government, corporate and information technology markets.