

The Uniform CPA Examination Alert

Fall 2006

New Practice Analysis

The AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) has recently authorized the conduct of a new practice analysis to update the content of the Uniform CPA Examination. The practice analysis will entail gathering data on the tasks performed in the workplace by newly certified CPAs, and determining what knowledge and skills are needed to perform them. The collected data will be used to revise the Content Specification Outlines (CSOs) and the revised CSOs will, in turn, ensure that the content of the examination reflects current professional practice.

According to Lawrence Field, member of the BOE and Chair of the Practice Analysis Oversight Group (PAOG), “the new practice analysis is essential to the content integrity of the CPA Examination. Since the last practice analysis was conducted about five years ago, many changes have occurred in the CPA professional environment. The practice analysis will enable us to address these changes as they relate to the content of the Uniform CPA Examination.”

In the next several months, a large number of CPAs will be asked to play a direct role in the practice analysis by completing surveys on the tasks performed, and the knowledge and skills needed by newly certified CPAs. Their cooperation will be essential to the success of the practice analysis because survey results will determine what changes are made in examination content. The impact of these changes will be felt throughout the profession as properly structured content in the CPA Examination will determine whether candidates are prepared to meet the challenges of the workplace.

As Lawrence Field says, “In order to ensure that the CPA Examination reflects current practice, we need the cooperation of individual CPAs and the support of the profession

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The Director's Desk Update from Gregory Johnson

Director of the CPA Examination

I am glad to say that the CPA Examination news is good. The number of candidates taking the Examination has increased to pre-CBT levels, and Simulation version 1.5 has been successfully implemented. Many new and exciting improvements are under way and many more are scheduled.

The AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) has recently authorized the conduct of a new practice analysis, designed to update the Uniform CPA Examination content to reflect current professional practice. Information about this major initiative is provided in this issue. Also included is a progress report on another BOE initiative, the diagnostic report project, which has now been successful in identifying a new—and much improved—diagnostic report format.

The scoring of the CPA Examination remains a mystery to many, especially when it comes to understanding how MST (Multi-Stage Testing) works, what IRT (Item Response Theory) is all about, and what these terms have to do with scoring. To help all who are not psychometricians and not testing experts, this issue contains an article providing a non-technical overview of the CPA Examination scoring process. It's simple, it's clear, and pretty much jargon-free. I think you will enjoy it.

Also included in this issue is a brief article on the development of new multiple-choice questions and simulations. It provides answers to some of the frequently asked questions about examination content - who writes new questions, who reviews them, and who decides whether they should appear on the examination.

Of special importance to candidates is the policy statement regarding the testing of new pronouncements, which now includes exceptional provisions for the Auditing standards about to go into effect. A new edition of *Tips for Taking the Uniform CPA Examination* is also provided. The Hot Topics section covers expected examination scheduling interruptions

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Where Do Examination Questions Come From?

In the computer-based test (CBT) environment, thousands of Uniform CPA Examination items (multiple-choice questions and simulations) are presented to candidates in every testing window. While some items may be re-used, all of them expire or otherwise lose their usefulness at some point. This means that the quality, vitality, and credibility of the CPA Examination are dependent, in large measure, on the constant influx of new items into the examination item bank.

Examination content development is a major AICPA effort, involving hundreds of accounting professionals who spend literally thousands of hours every year on the development of new multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and simulations. The largely unsung heroes and heroines among them are the members of the AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) committees and subcommittees with examination content responsibilities. These are the Content Committee, four subcommittees — Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), Regulation (REG), and Business Environment and Concepts (BEC) — and three simulations development subcommittees, one for each of the three examination sections containing simulations (AUD, FAR, and REG).

According to Lesa Davis, AICPA Senior Manager, Professional Relevance and Quality, “At the AICPA, committee members are extraordinary. They work harder and are more dedicated than any other volunteer professionals I have met.” Her colleague, Senior Technical Manager Leonardo DeCandia agrees, adding “I am truly impressed by the commitment of AICPA committee members, and their

willingness to devote time — often at considerable personal sacrifice — to examination development issues.”

New MCQs are written by CPAs who are recruited by professional testing organizations under contract to the AICPA. The AICPA Examinations Team oversees the writing of MCQs and reviews all new questions before submitting them for committee review. New simulations are created by AICPA simulation development groups consisting of CPA volunteer practitioners and academics who work with AICPA simulation development staff.

The writing of simulations is actually something of a pioneering effort. Unlike the MCQs, which have a long testing history behind them, simulations are a relatively new concept in CBT. Some of the tasks currently included in CPA Examination simulations are, in fact, new item forms in the sense that such forms have never before been used on computerized examinations. The broad scope of simulations permits innovation, giving free rein to the creativity and imagination of simulation development subcommittees.

Committee and subcommittee members act primarily as reviewers of the thousands of new examination items presented to them every year. They are practicing CPAs, accounting faculty, and, in some cases, attorneys, who are thoroughly familiar with the level of knowledge and skills needed by entry-level CPAs. Committees and subcommittees are supported by AICPA staff liaisons who can call upon other members of the Examination Team — CPA professionals, test development specialists, psychometricians, and IT experts — for any additional assistance that may be required. 📧

New Practice Analysis *(continued from page 1)*

as a whole. Our attempt to update examination content in protection of public interest cannot succeed otherwise.”

The leadership body for the practice analysis is the PAOG (Practice Analysis Oversight Group). Its members are: Lawrence Field, Chair (Member, Board of Examiners); Linda L. Biek (Executive Director, Tennessee Board of Accountancy); Gary L. Fish (Chairman, Illinois Board of Examiners); John

Katzenmeyer (Member, NASBA Board of Directors); Nina Kavich (Member, Board of Examiners); Gerald Searfoss (Member, Content Committee); Janice B. Wilson—Marcum (Member, NASBA Examinations Committee); Bruno Zumbo (Member, Psychometric Oversight Committee).

Questions about the new practice analysis may be addressed to Joanne Lindstrom at jlindstrom@aicpa.org. 📧

The Director's Desk *(continued from page 1)*

during the move of Prometric's headquarters, as well as sample test technical issues. And finally, be sure to read the short item about content changes on IQEX.

I should mention that we have recently held a new round of candidate focus groups as a follow-up to the sessions of two years ago. The results have not yet been compiled but we hope to discover whether candidate attitudes toward the

CPA Examination have changed, whether there are any new issues of concern to them, and what they now like—or don't like—about the process. We will provide more information about the focus group project in future issues.

Should you have comments or suggestions for *The CPA Examination Alert* or the www.cpa-exam.org website, please feel free to contact me at gjohnson@aicpa.org. 📧

Hot Topics

Examination Scheduling Alert

While Thomson Prometric is moving its headquarters from one Baltimore location to another, the following interruptions in examination scheduling are expected to occur:

- ▶ NO INTERNET SCHEDULING — from Friday, September 15, 8:00 p.m.(Eastern) to Sunday, September 17, 8:00 p.m. (Eastern)
- ▶ NO INTERNET OR PHONE SCHEDULING — from Friday October 13, 8:00 p.m. (Eastern) to Sunday, October 15, 8:00 p.m. (Eastern)

Technical Support for Sample Tests

In recent months, some Windows XP Service Pack 2 users have reported problems in installing sample tests. These problems occurred because users have been overlooking the pop-up near the toolbar that starts the installation process. To prevent such inadvertent errors, special step-by-step installation instructions for Windows XP Service Pack 2 users have

now been posted on the www.cpa-exam.org website.

A different issue has been reported by candidates who have attempted to launch sample tests with settings on their PCs for languages other than English. In order to gain access to the sample tests, the language settings on the Internet Explorer browser and Windows Operating System must be for English. Steps to change language settings are provided in the Sample Test FAQs available under “Tutorial and Sample Tests” on the www.cpa-exam.org website.

Candidates who encounter technical difficulties with sample test installation should write to cpaexam@aicpa.org with as much detail as they can provide — what steps they took to install the sample tests, where they ran into problems, what messages appeared on the screen and when, etc. Such details are needed to reproduce the process the candidate followed in order to identify the problem. Just saying that the installation attempt failed is not enough to get helpful advice. 📧

Testing of New Pronouncements: A Policy Update

New Auditing Standards

Statements on Auditing Standards No. 104-111 (SAS 104-111), collectively known as “risk assessment standards,” were approved by the Auditing Standards Board of the AICPA in March 2006. These standards are effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after December 15, 2006. Early application is permitted.

The AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) has decided that the new risk assessment standards will NOT be eligible to be tested on the Uniform CPA Examination until the July/August 2007 testing window. SAS 104-111 reflect a significant change in the professional standards and the requirements for conducting an audit.

As an **exception** to current policy, the new risk assessment standards will NOT be tested concurrently with existing standards. This policy exception applies only to the Auditing and Attestation (AUD) examination section as it relates to SAS 104-111.

All Other New Pronouncements

The current policy remains in effect for all other new pronouncements. This policy states that new pronouncements are eligible to be tested on the Uniform CPA Examination in the testing window beginning *six months after a pronouncement’s effective date*, unless early application is permitted. When early application is permitted, the pronouncement is eligible to be tested in the window

beginning *six months after the issuance date*. In this case, both the old and new pronouncements may be tested until the old pronouncement is superseded.

For the federal taxation area, the Internal Revenue Code and federal tax regulations *in effect six months before the beginning of the current window* may be tested.

For all other subjects covered in the Regulation (REG) and Business Environment and Concepts (BEC) sections, materials eligible to be tested include *federal laws in the window beginning six months after their effective date*, and *uniform acts in the window beginning one year after their adoption by a simple majority of the jurisdictions*. 📧

How is the CPA Exam Scored?

Introduction

This document is intended to provide a non-technical overview of the CPA Examination scoring process. It begins with a high-level overview of the Exam and how it is scored. Following the overview are a series of questions and answers that provide more detail about specific aspects of the scoring process. The purpose of this format is to provide a general understanding of the scoring process and offer a more in-depth explanation of specific aspects of the scoring process to readers.

The information included in this document is based on questions frequently asked by state board representatives and other stakeholders. We recognize that this document will not answer all questions about the scoring of the CPA Exam and that new questions will likely arise as this document is read and discussed. We welcome additional questions and anticipate updating the document periodically based on the feedback we receive.

Description of the CPA Examination

The CPA Examination is comprised of four sections: Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), and Regulation (REG). All four sections contain multiple-choice questions. AUD, FAR, and REG sections also contain simulations.

The multiple-choice questions within each test section are administered to candidates in three groups (called “testlets”). Each testlet contains “operational” and “pretest” questions. The operational questions are the ones used to generate the candidates’ scores. Pretest questions are not scored; instead, candidates’ responses to these questions are used to evaluate the questions’ psychometric performance. Pretest questions that are psychometrically acceptable become operational questions on future exams. This strategy for pretesting questions is common in the credentialing field.

The AUD, FAR, and REG multiple-choice testlets vary in difficulty—there are two levels that are labeled “medium difficult” and “difficult.” These are simply labels. Within the testlets, items often vary substantially in their difficulty levels, but across testlets, those labeled “difficult” contain more hard questions than testlets labeled “medium difficult.” Every candidate receives a medium difficult testlet first. Candidates who do well on the first testlet receive a difficult second testlet. Otherwise, they receive a second medium difficult testlet. The scoring procedures take the difficulty of the testlet into account so that candidates are scored fairly regardless of the difficulty of the testlets they take.

The AUD, FAR, and REG sections contain two additional testlets containing simulations. Simulations are complex

case studies that allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by generating responses to questions rather than simply selecting a correct answer. Simulations require candidates to use spreadsheets, conduct research, and generate written communications. Each simulation requires numerous responses from candidates (up to several dozen in some cases).

Before appearing on the CPA Examination, both operational and pretest questions have passed through several extensive and rigorous subject matter reviews to ensure that they are technically correct, have a single best or correct answer, are current, and measure entry level content as specified in the Content Specification Outlines (CSOs). The CSOs specify the percentage of each section that should be devoted to each content area. The current CSOs were adopted in 2002 based on the results of a practice analysis and state board responses to an exposure draft of the recommended CSOs; CSO references were updated in 2005. Operational questions have also been statistically evaluated to ensure they meet the psychometric requirements of the CPA Exam.

Overview of the CPA Exam by Section				
Section	AUD	BEC	FAR	REG
Time	4.5 Hours	2.5 Hours	4 Hours	3 Hours
Multiple-Choice Testlets	3 (Difficulty varies)	3 (Difficulty does not vary)	3 (Difficulty varies)	3 (Difficulty varies)
Operational Questions per Testlet	25	25	25	20
Pretest Questions per Testlet	5	5	5	4
Simulations	2	0	2	2

Score Scale and Passing Score

CPA Exam scores are reported on a scale that runs from 0 to 99. The total score is not a percent correct score. It is a combination of scores from the multiple-choice, simulation, and written communication portions of the exam¹. (Written communication exercises are included in the simulation testlets, but are scored separately). Scores on the multiple-choice and simulation portions of the exam are calculated using formulas that take into account not only whether the question was answered correctly or incorrectly, but also statistical characteristics of the questions themselves.

¹ Since BEC does not have simulations, the BEC score is based solely on multiple-choice questions.

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How is the CPA Exam Scored? *(continued from page 4)*

A total score of 75 is required to pass each section. There are no minimum scores required on the different kinds of questions (multiple-choice, simulation, written communication) or on different content areas within each section to earn a passing score.

Weighting the Kinds of Questions and Calculating the Final Score

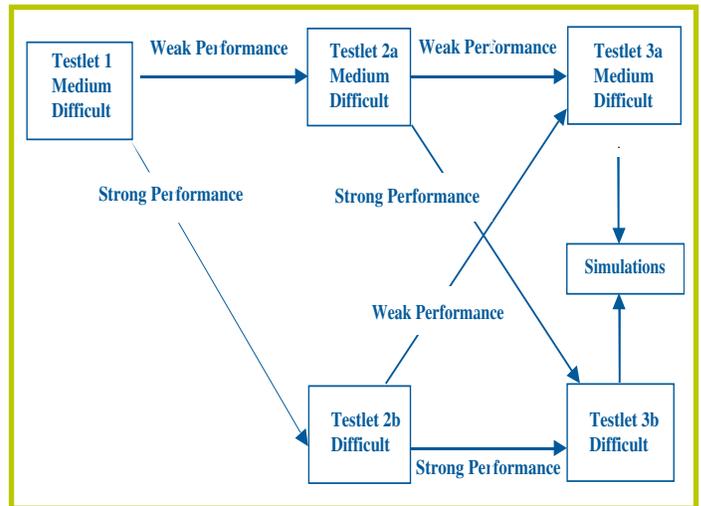
The multiple-choice questions count for 70% of the total score. Simulations are 20% and written communication is 10% of the total score. Through a multi-step process, a separate score ranging from 0 to 100 is calculated for each type of question (multiple-choice, simulation, and written communication). These scores are multiplied by the weights (.70, .20, and .10), summed, and transformed to the CPA Examination Score Scale that has the passing score set at 75. (See Question 9 for a more detailed description of this process.)

CPA Exam Scoring: Questions and Answers

1. If different candidates take different versions of the Exam are the scores comparable? Yes. Scores from the different versions of the Exam are placed on a standard scale so they can be compared to each other. This process accounts for any differences in difficulty among the versions. All total scores are reported on the CPA Examination 0 to 99 scale². The use of a standard reporting scale is common practice in the testing industry. You may be familiar, for example, with the 200 to 800 SAT scale or the 1 to 36 ACT scale.

2. Are some versions harder than others? Yes. Candidates take three multiple-choice testlets. The first testlet is always medium difficult. Candidates who do well on the first testlet will get a harder second testlet while those who do not do well on the first testlet will receive another medium difficult testlet. Similarly, the third testlet can be a medium or a difficult testlet and assignment of one of these to candidates is based upon performance on the two previously administered testlets. The diagram in the next column shows how it works. Depending on their performance, candidates may receive (1) three medium difficult testlets, (2) two medium and one difficult testlets, or (3) one medium and two difficult testlets. This is called Multi-Stage Testing (MST) or Computer Assisted Sequential Testing (CAST).

3. Is Multi-Stage Testing fair? Why are you using it? Yes, it is fair. Since the characteristics of the test questions are taken into account in the scoring, there is no advantage or disadvantage to being assigned testlets of different difficulty. The advantage of the design is that since candidates are seeing test questions that are matched to their proficiency levels, fewer questions are needed to obtain accurate estimates of candidate proficiency levels. The result is a better exam.



4. How do you decide which questions are hard and which are moderate? The difficulty of the test questions (and other statistics that are used to describe each test question) are determined through statistical analysis of candidate responses. Question difficulty is not a category (e.g. moderate or hard), but is a numeric value along a scale (e.g. 1.5). Testlets are classified as medium or difficult based on the average difficulty of the questions in them.

5. Does that mean hard testlets can have easy questions and less difficult testlets can have hard ones? Yes. All testlets have questions that range in difficulty. Hard testlets just have a greater proportion of difficult questions than moderate ones.

6. What if a smart candidate does poorly on the first testlet? Can the candidate still pass? Yes, the candidate can still pass the exam but the candidate will need to do better on the second and third testlets. We did an analysis of some candidates who did poorly on the first testlet, but whose performance improved on the second testlet. If we had made a pass-fail decision about these candidates based solely on the multiple-choice questions about forty percent of them would have passed.

7. Can a candidate get all medium difficult testlets and still pass? Yes.

8. Does this happen? Yes, but not very often. It would require good but not excellent performance on the first two testlets, and then excellent performance on the last testlet.

9. Can a candidate pass just by doing well on the multiple-choice questions? No. The highest possible score a candidate could get from the multiple-choice questions is 70. A score of at least 75 is required to pass.

² Scores from the current CPA Exam are NOT comparable to those from the previous, paper-based CPA Exam.

How is the CPA Exam Scored? *(continued from page 5)*

10. What happens if candidates get a testlet that is too easy or too hard for them? They will probably receive the same total score they would have gotten if they had been assigned the right testlet. Every test score has some uncertainty or imprecision associated with it. The more questions someone answers and the more questions that are at the right level of difficulty for a particular candidate, the smaller the uncertainty (and greater the precision). The only shortcoming of receiving a testlet that is too easy or too hard is that the total score may not be quite as “precise” as the score obtained when the optimal testlets are administered to a candidate.

We did a study using generated data to model what would happen if people were assigned a completely inappropriate set of testlets. In the study, there were 1,000 “simulated candidates” at each of 5 proficiency levels ranging from very low to very high. Each simulated candidate was “administered” three moderate testlets (MMM) and a pass-fail decision was made. Each candidate was then administered one moderate and two hard testlets (MHH). The difference in the passing rates was negligible as shown in the following table.

Proficiency Group	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Difference in Pass Rates	0.1%	0.2%	1.4%	0.0%	0/0%

11. Can I compute my score from the number of questions I answered correctly? No. A computer is required to score the CPA Examination accurately because the scoring takes into account the statistical characteristics of each question administered.

12. What do you mean when you say “statistical characteristics”? There are three statistics used to describe the questions: Difficulty—whether the question is easier or harder for candidates, Discrimination—how well the question differentiates between more able and less able candidates, and Guessing—the likelihood of candidates answering the question correctly just by guessing. The statistics for the multiple-choice questions are generated when the questions are administered as pretest questions and used in the scoring when the questions are operational. The statistics for simulations are calculated the first time they are used. The formulas for generating the statistics and scoring the exam come from modern test theory, sometimes called “Item Response Theory.” Item response theory is being used or has been adopted by nearly all of the large licensing examination programs in this country and by many of the moderate-sized and smaller examination programs too.

13. What is Item Response Theory (IRT)? The term is simply the name given by Dr. Frederic Lord in 1980 to a class of psychometric models for exam development and analysis that

report items and candidates on the same scale. When the psychometric model fits the data, as it does with our exams, it becomes straightforward to be very efficient in the design of exams, to obtain estimates of error in candidate scores, and to compare candidate scores easily and quickly when they are based on exams that differ in difficulty.

14. Does this mean two candidates could answer the same number of questions correctly, but get different scores? Yes, since candidate scores depend on the characteristics of the questions, not just how many they got right.

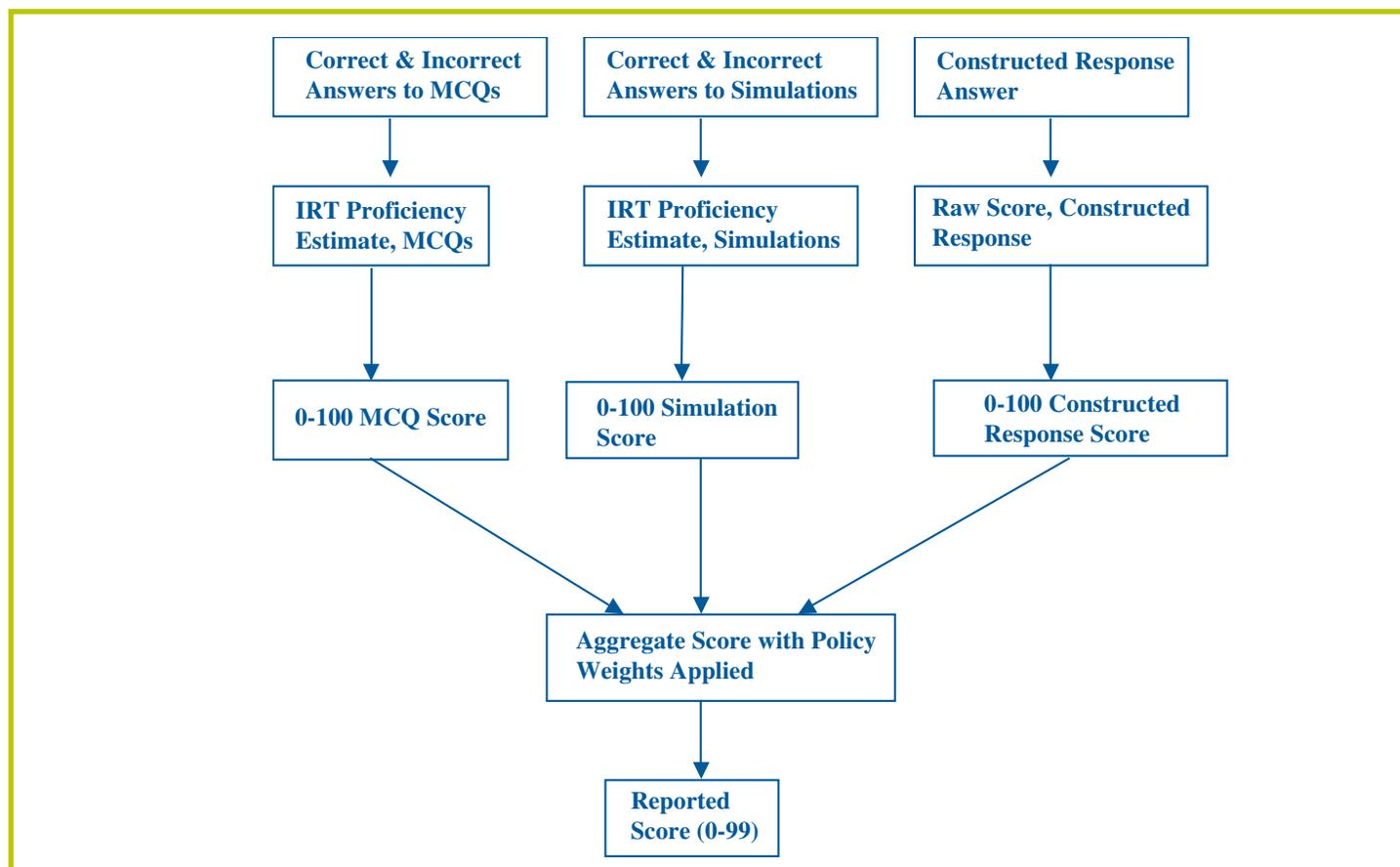
15. In college some of my professors gave tests that had questions that were worth one point and others that were worth two points. If one student got five of the one-point questions right, he got five points. If another student answered five two-point questions right, he got 10 points. Is that what you’re doing? Conceptually, yes. But the professor assigned the weights based on judgment. In the CPA Exam, the weights are determined from candidate response data using item response theory.

16. I understand that item response theory says the scores are comparable, but do you have any evidence that scores from tests that vary in difficulty can really be comparable? Yes. It is possible to obtain an estimate of each candidate’s proficiency on each testlet. Although these estimates are not reliable or consistent enough to use for reporting scores, they do provide useful information. We compared proficiency estimates from each of the three multiple choice testlets for a sample of about 2,000 candidates. The proficiency estimates were comparable in 85 to 90% of the comparisons, regardless of whether the testlets were of the same or different difficulty. When the three testlets are combined, the reliability and accuracy of the exam increases considerably. The same finding has been reported by many testing agencies which is why item response theory models are so widely used.

17. In general terms, what are the steps taken to produce the reported score? For purposes of score reporting, each component (multiple-choice, constructed response, and the remainder of the simulations) is initially treated as a separate test. For the multiple-choice and simulation components item response theory is used to determine a proficiency estimate for each type of question. The multiple-choice estimate is then mapped to a score between 0 and 100 on a multiple-choice scale. Similarly, the simulation estimate is mapped to a score between 0 and 100 on a simulation scale. For the constructed response questions, the grade assigned by a grader (0-4) is multiplied by 25 to put it on a 0 to 100 scale. The three scores are then combined with the policy weights (70% multiple-choice, 20% simulations, 10% written communication) to create an aggregate score. The final step involves mapping the aggregate score to the 0 to 99 scale used for score reporting. The process can be viewed in the schematic on page 7.

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How is the CPA Exam Scored? *(continued from page 6)*



18. Who are the subject matter experts who do the question reviews? They are CPAs with expertise in the area being tested who volunteer their time. There are also subject matter experts on the Exams staff at the AICPA.

19. How was the passing score set? Volunteer CPAs participated in a standard setting study. They reviewed test questions and how candidates performed on those questions in order to make judgments of what test performance was required to protect the public interest. The results of this study were used by the Board of Examiners as a guide when it established the passing score. The passing score chosen

by the BOE was then mapped to a score of 75 on the scale used to report scores to candidates.

20. Is there more that I can read about the Exam? Yes. There are many technical reports related to the psychometric characteristics of the Exam. All of these reports will be posted to the Psychometrics section of the Exam website, www.cpa-exam.org, soon. Other useful publications can already be found under the Research and Reports section of the site. In the interim, copies may be obtained by request from Carie Chester at cchester@aicpa.org. If you have additional questions about the scoring of the CPA Exam, please send them to Carie Chester at the e-mail listed above. 📧

Content Changes in IQEX

Beginning with the November 2006 administration, the content of IQEX (the International Uniform Certified Public Accountant Qualification Examination) will change to focus on areas that are unique and important to U.S. practice. The revised IQEX Content Specification Outline (posted at www.cpa-exam.org under Getting Started/International Applicants) indicates the content areas that IQEX covers as well as the percentage of the examination devoted to each.

IQEX is a four-and-a-half hour examination designed to facilitate the U.S. CPA qualification process for international accounting professionals whose professional bodies have entered into mutual recognition agreements with the U.S. accounting profession. IQEX is developed and scored by the AICPA. A candidate bulletin and IQEX application materials are available from the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) at www.nasba.org. The examination is offered every

November in computer-based linear format.

Mutual recognition agreements between the U.S. accounting profession and international accounting bodies are currently in effect with the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA); Instituto Mexicano De Contadores Publicos (IMCP); Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI); Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA); and CPA Australia. 📧

Tips for Taking the Uniform CPA Examination

Before the Examination

Schedule your test session early — as soon as you receive your Notice to Schedule (NTS) — at www.prometric.com/cpa. This website is available 24/7 and can also be used to cancel or reschedule appointments.

Make sure your name on the Notice to Schedule (NTS) is exactly the same as on your ID documents. Any name discrepancies or ID issues must be resolved before the examination by contacting NASBA at 1-866-MY-NASBA (1-866-696-2722).

Learn how the examination software functions by reviewing the tutorial at www.cpa-exam.org, even if you have previously taken computerized Examination sections. Simulation version 1.5 software is in effect as of APRIL 1, 2006. This means that any simulation taken on or after that date reflects somewhat different functionality than was previously in use. Refer to “Response Types” under Simulations in the tutorial to learn how to respond to authoritative literature questions: for AUDIT, see *Review Letter Item Type* and *Professional Standards Item Type*; for FAR, *Accounting and Reporting Item Type*; for REG, *Tax Citation Item Type*.

Review the Sample Tests at www.cpa-exam.org to become familiar with examination format and to observe simulation version 1.5 software in action. Be sure to review how to use the **search** and **advanced search** functions. In addition, practice using the **spreadsheet** tool and understand how to work with the **online calculator**. **Software functions are unique to the CPA Examination and will NOT be the same as on your home or work computer.**

Pay special attention to the directions for transferring text in response to research questions. In order to move text into the response area, remember that you **MUST** split the screen and have the research tab on one page and standards on the other. Note also that some text cannot be selected for transfer. (For more information about this, read *Special Simulation Version 1.5 Instructions* on the www.cpa-exam.org website.)

Plan your examination time. Make sure you understand the difference between **examination time** (the time designated for the examination section) and **session time** (examination time plus 30 minutes allocated at the test center for the sign-in process and survey). **Allow about 35 minutes to complete each REG simulation and about 45 minutes to complete each AUD and FAR simulation.** If you are taking a section that consists of three multiple-choice question testlets and two simulations, plan the time you want to spend on each simulation and then divide the rest of the examination time into three equal parts to arrive at the time allocation for each testlet.

At the Examination

Be sure to bring your Notice to Schedule (NTS) and two valid forms of ID to the test center. You will not be permitted to test without required documents. **Report for testing at least 30 minutes early.**

Don't spend excessive time on the introductory screens. There is a time limit (about 10 minutes) on introductory screens and if that limit is exceeded, the test session will automatically terminate. If the session terminates, it will not be possible to re-start the examination, and you will have to reapply to take your scheduled section.

Report equipment/functionality issues to test center staff without delay. Don't try to fix the problem yourself and don't spend examination time thinking about it before you report it. Remind the test center staff to file a report describing the problem.

Report any concerns about test questions to test center staff after the session. Test center staff are not familiar with the examination and cannot help with inquiries about test questions. Concerns about test questions should be directed in writing to the AICPA (FAX to 609-671-2922). If possible, the question and testlet numbers should be included in the FAX.

Know your options in the event problems occur. Although equipment malfunctions are rare, they sometimes happen and may be corrected. For example, if text on the screen is illegible or distorted, if access to Authoritative Literature is not available, if the keyboard or mouse is not working, or if the computer keeps crashing, you should expect the problem to be resolved by test center staff. If you believe that the problem was not handled appropriately, contact NASBA at candidatecare@nasba.org.

Remember that in the event of a power outage or an incident requiring a re-start, the computer clock will stop and you will NOT lose examination time. The clock will start running again only when your computer is re-connected to the power source and your examination is re-launched. Your responses up to the time of the re-start will not be lost as responses are saved at frequent intervals throughout the examination.

Test center staff cannot help with examination software functions. While test center staff are responsible for the equipment delivering the examination to you, they are not familiar with software functions that are unique to the CPA Examination. If you have questions or problems during the examination, READ the instructions and refer to the “Help” text. Also, be sure to review the tutorial and sample tests at www.cpa-exam.org before the examination.

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Tips for Taking the Uniform CPA Examination (continued from page 8)

After the Examination

Keep the Confirmation of Attendance form issued after the examination as it provides valuable contact information. As directed on this form, **report any examination incidents/concerns in writing, even if these issues have already been reported by test center staff.**

If your Confirmation of Attendance did not print, your examination responses should NOT be affected. There is usually no connection between failure of the notice to print and the successful completion of the test session. If you do not receive Confirmation of Attendance at the test center, contact NASBA at candidatecare@nasba.org to receive a

copy. Should there be an issue with your result file, NASBA will contact you.

If you did not click on “Done” to signify completion of the last testlet/simulation, your responses will still be captured. Examination responses are saved at frequent intervals throughout the examination.

If you feel that the circumstances surrounding your test administration prevented you from performing at a level consistent with your knowledge and skills, contact NASBA at candidatecare@nasba.org Reports regarding test center experiences must be filed as soon as possible after the examination, and well before scores are released. 📧

The New Diagnostic Report

A new Uniform CPA Examination candidate diagnostic performance report will be distributed to candidates beginning in the November/December 2006 testing window. The new report format has just been approved by the Psychometric Oversight Committee (POC) and, at POC’s recommendation, by the AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) as a whole.

The purpose of the diagnostic performance report is to help candidates identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of their examination performance as they prepare to re-take examination sections. The new report is a much improved and completely redesigned version of the one now in use.

The process of selecting the new report involved several rounds of reviews by individuals and groups, including accountancy board members and staff, followed by sample report revisions and refinements in response to reviewer comments. The final round of reviews took place at four candidate focus groups held in June — two of them in Houston,

TX and two in St. Louis, MO. In independent sessions, all four groups expressed strong preference for the same report.

Two BOE members — David Landsittel and David Harrison — provided leadership to the diagnostic report project and attended the final focus group sessions. Commenting on the outcome of these sessions, David Landsittel said, “We are delighted that candidate focus group participants reached consensus on a new report, and that they did this so effortlessly. The fact that four separate groups of candidates chose one particular report gives us confidence that this report is the one that candidates will find genuinely useful.”

Information about the new report — as well as the report itself — will be posted on the www.cpa-exam.org website this fall so that candidates may become familiar with the new format. The posted materials will include explanations of the report terminology and concepts, as well as guidance on how to interpret examination performance information. 📧

New On the CPA Examination Website — www.cpa-exam.org

- ◆ 2005 Elijah Watt Sells Award Winners — a list of the ten candidates who completed taking the Uniform CPA Examination in 2005, passed all four sections on the first attempt, and earned the highest cumulative scores.
- ◆ Testing of New Pronouncements: A Policy Update — a policy statement regarding the testing of new auditing standards as well as all other new pronouncements.
- ◆ Sample Test Installation Instructions for Windows XP Service Pack 2 Users

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Harborside Financial Center
201 Plaza Three
Jersey City, NJ 07311-3881

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The Uniform CPA Examination Alert

Fall 2006

Upcoming Events

September 14-15, 2006
AICPA BEC Subcommittee
(Charlotte, NC)
Contact: Roberta Smith
(609) 671-2066

September 19-20, 2006
AICPA Content Committee
(location TBD)
Contact: Lesa Davis
(609) 671-2934

October 5-6, 2006
AICPA Audit Subcommittee
(location TBD)
Contact: Lesa Davis
(609)671-2934

October 13-14, 2006
AICPA Board of Examiners
(Princeton, NJ)
Contact: Gregory Johnson
(609) 671-2054

November 29 – December 1, 2006
Joint Meeting of AICPA Content Committee,
Content Subcommittees, and Simulation
Development Groups
(location TBD)
Contact: Lesa Davis
(609) 671-2934