

A Candidate's Introduction to CPA Alberta's Regulatory Requirements

Information from CPA Alberta regarding the
candidate requirements in Alberta.



Candidates in Alberta are regulated by CPA Alberta. This publication will act as a guide to the CPA Alberta resources available to candidates and obligations of candidates.

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General Information

While the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) facilitates the CPA program for the western Canadian provinces, all candidates are still governed by their respective provincial organizations and provincial legislation. All Alberta CPA candidates are governed by the Alberta *Chartered Professional Accountants Act (CPA Act)*. This information booklet is to assist CPA Alberta candidates in understanding their requirements with CPA Alberta under the *CPA Act*.

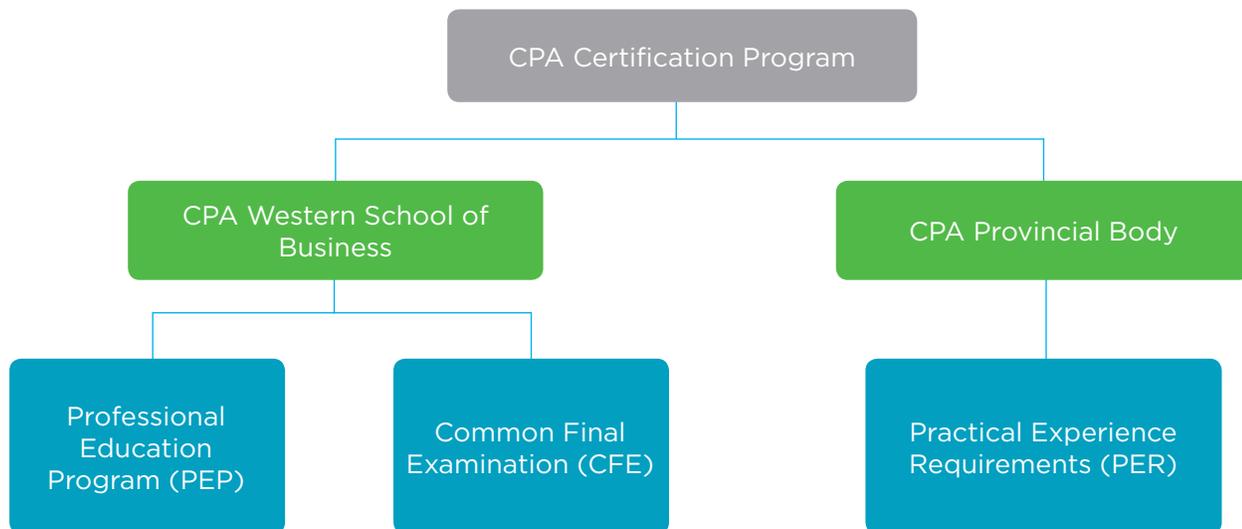
For questions relating to the Professional Education Program (PEP) or the Common Final Examination (CFE), please refer to the CPA Western School of Business contact page on their website at the following link:

<http://www.cpawsb.ca/contact-us/>

For questions about practical experience, please contact practicalexperience@cpaalberta.ca

CPA Alberta governing documents, including the *CPA Act*, can be found on our website at the following link:

<https://www.cpaalberta.ca/Protecting-the-Public/Governing-Documents>



Conduct of Candidates

Candidates are registrants of CPA Alberta. As such, they have all of the same duties and obligations that designated members of the profession and professional accounting firms have to comply with the *Act* and the CPA Alberta *Rules of Professional Conduct*. Those duties and obligations include complying with all the requirements of CPA Alberta, including the underlying obligation to be ethical in all aspects of conduct, both professionally and personally.

The *Rules of Professional Conduct* are available on the CPA Alberta website in the "Protecting the Public" area. It is recommended that candidates review the *Rules of Professional Conduct* so that they are aware of their obligations under the Rules.

If CPA Alberta becomes aware of unprofessional conduct on the part of a candidate, including breaching the *Rules of Professional Conduct*, that conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the complaint and discipline processes under Part 5 the *Act*. The CPA Alberta website has a brochure available that outlines what the complaints and discipline process entails.

Practical Experience Requirements

In addition to formal education and the common final examination, the CPA certification program requires CPA candidates to complete a term of relevant practical experience.

This practical experience can be achieved through either of the following routes, or a combination of the two:

- **Experience Verification Route**
The experience verification route requires CPA candidates to obtain and demonstrate they have developed the necessary competencies. They are required to complete detailed practical experience reports that the profession assesses in depth throughout the period of practical experience.
- **Pre-approved Program Route**
The pre-approved program route requires employers — offices or organizations — to develop defined training programs and have them approved by a provincial/regional body. The approval process requires the organization to identify two processes:
 1. How the required competencies will be developed
 2. How the organization will support CPA candidates through the CPA certification programThe provincial/regional body will work closely with the office or organization to prepare their applications for approval and to ensure the appropriateness of the program. The assessment of the experience is done as part of the approval process; as a result, less documentation will be required from CPA candidates as they work in these programs.

What are the practical experience requirements for a candidate to complete the experience component of the CPA certification program?

In order to be eligible for membership, a CPA candidate would be required to:

- Work a minimum of 30 months in relevant paid position and have progressive experience
- Be appropriately mentored during this time
- Demonstrate that they have met the technical and enabling competency requirements by the end of their term of practical experience
- Obtain their experience through the experience verification or pre-approved program route (or a combination of the two)
- Report all experience in PERT (the profession's online reporting tool)

When should a candidate start reporting in the Practical Experience Reporting Tool (PERT)?

Candidates are encouraged to create a Practical Experience Reporting Tool (PERT) profile as soon as they are registered in the CPA Professional Education Program (PEP). If a candidate is not employed at the time of creating their profile, they should note their path as “unemployed”. When a candidate’s employment status changes, they are required to update their PERT profile within 90 days.

What is a Pre-Approved Program Route Provider?

A Pre-Approved Program Route Provider (PPRP) is an employer that has worked with CPA Alberta to establish a formal program route that will allow candidates to obtain the necessary experience to achieve the practical experience requirements within 30 months. These routes also have established a pre-approved number of positions.

Does it matter whether a candidate gets their experience through the Experience Verification Route or the Pre-approved Program Route?

As it relates to membership, whether a candidate gets their experience through the Experience Verification Route (EVR) or the Pre-approved Program Route (PPR) does not impact their application.

If a candidate is planning on providing professional or public accounting services post qualification (i.e. once they become a member), the practical experience stream that they choose may impact their eligibility to register a professional accounting firm (PAF). Please refer to the Varied Registration Criteria information provided in the Public Practice section below for more information on the public practice requirements.

What are the candidate's responsibilities for practical experience?

Candidates will be responsible to ensure that their PERT profiles are created as soon as they are registered within PEP. They also must keep their PERT profiles current and up-to-date. Candidates are required to update their employment information within 90 days of securing a new employer.

Candidates will also be required to:

- Report their experience as it happens
- Meet with their mentor semi-annually and ensure those meetings are documented in PERT
- Adhere to all reporting deadlines
- Respond to requests for information from CPA Alberta within prescribed timelines

How long does it take for a candidate to have their practical experience assessed?

Practical experience assessments conducted by the profession can take between four (4) to eight (8) weeks, depending on volume of submissions. Candidates are not eligible to submit a membership application until their practical experience has been assessed and they receive written confirmation that they are deemed to have met all practical experience requirements.

Admission to Membership

When is a candidate eligible to apply for membership?

Once a candidate has successfully completed the Common Final Exam (CFE) and the practical experience requirements, they will be eligible for membership with CPA Alberta. Both the CFE and practical experience requirements must be met to be eligible.

Is there a timeline in which a candidate must apply for membership once all requirements have been met?

Once a candidate has successfully completed the Common Final Exam (CFE) and the practical experience requirements, they will have 12 months to apply for membership. If a candidate does not apply for membership with CPA Alberta, or another provincial CPA body, within this timeline, they will be required to submit a request to the CPA Alberta Registration Committee to determine their eligibility for membership at that time. The Registration Committee may impose additional requirements on the candidate prior to admission to membership.

Does a candidate have to apply for membership or do they automatically get admitted once all the requirements are met?

Candidates must apply for membership once they become eligible – no automatic application is made on their behalf. Candidate applications for membership are not accepted until such time as all education and practical experience requirements have been met and the CPA Alberta Practical Experience team has advised the candidate they are now eligible for membership.

Membership application information can be found on the CPA Alberta website at the following link:

<https://www.cpaalberta.ca/Members/Application>

When can a candidate start using the CPA designation?

The use of the CPA designation in Alberta is strictly prohibited to only allow the use of the designation by members in good standing of CPA Alberta. Candidates are not permitted to use the CPA designation until such time as they are admitted to membership and have received confirmation from CPA Alberta that they are registered to do so.

How long will it take to process a membership application?

Processing timelines for a complete application take between four (4) to six (6) weeks. This timeline may be exceeded in cases where an incomplete application is submitted, documentation is outstanding, or practical experience requirements have yet to be assessed. It is in the candidate's best interest to make sure an application is not submitted until all requirements are met and all documentation required can accompany it.

When will a candidate receive their membership certificate?

Membership certificates are provided once a candidate has submitted their membership application and it has been processed and approved. Once admitted, the candidate will receive a welcome package, along with their CPA Membership Certificate, in the post generally within three (3) to four (4) weeks from notification of admission being received.

How soon after admission to membership does a new CPA have to meet the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements?

By no later than January 1, 2022, continuing professional development (CPD) requirements will be changing. Under these new requirements, all new CPA members will need to meet the annual CPD requirements for the year of admission. The new member may report any CPD learning activities participated in during the admission year as part of their CPD requirements. These activities could include, but are not limited to, the CPA professional education program modules if completed within the reporting year.

Working in Public Practice

What services require registration in Alberta?

The Alberta *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* (CPA Act) requires registration as a Professional Accounting Firm (PAF) when a registrant is engaged in Alberta in any professional accounting practice or public accounting practice services.

The practice of professional or public accounting is defined as the providing of or offering to provide any of the following services:

- I. an assurance engagement (audit, review or other assurance)
- II. a specified auditing procedures engagement
- III. a compilation engagement
- IV. accounting services
- V. forensic accounting, financial investigation or financial litigation support services
- VI. advice about or interpretation of taxation matters
- VII. preparation of a tax return or other statutory information filing, if prepared in conjunction with any service referred to in (i) to (vi).

Can a candidate offer professional or public accounting practice services?

A candidate is not permitted to offer professional or public accounting practice services on their own or through a non-registered firm. In order for a candidate to gain the practical experience required to register a professional accounting firm (PAF), they must gain experience in a registered PAF. Depending on the level of service that a candidate is looking to provide in the future, this PAF may also need to be registered as a Pre-approved Program Route Provider (PPRP). It is always advisable to check with CPA Alberta to ensure that the company a candidate is considering being employed with will provide the desired qualifying practical experience.

If a candidate has questions about their practical experience requirements or the qualifying practical experience provided by an organization they are considering working for, they should contact CPA Alberta at PracticalExperience@cpaalberta.ca.

Professional and Public Accounting Practice Varied Registration Model

Professional accounting firms (PAFs) are registered in Alberta under the Varied Registration Model. This model provides clarity for clients and prospective clients on the types of services that a PAF can perform and will follow the standards set for PAF registrations (including licensure in some provinces) across the country. The Varied Registration Model contains four categories, which are designed to capture and accommodate the various and unique types of PAFs currently in existence:

- Audit
- Review
- Compilation
- Other regulated services (including public accounting practice services)

Under this model, PAFs are registered based on an “approvals” basis: what areas of service the firm provides. As an example, a firm may be registered as providing compilation, review, and other regulated services.

Registration in this model is based on the training, qualifications, and experience of the members of the PAF. So, within any given PAF, different CPAs may be able to provide different services. CPA Alberta assesses any member who has the authority to issue any services defined as professional or public accounting practice on behalf of the firm to determine their eligibility to provide these services based on the requirements outlined in the Varied Registration Model. It is subsequently the firm’s responsibility to ensure appropriate individuals are providing appropriate services to clients and based on the staff member’s assessment as provided by CPA Alberta. This ensures that appropriately trained and qualified individuals are able to provide the services they are qualified and competent to deliver.

Category Requirements

Each of the four categories in the Varied Registration Model has education, experience and examination requirements established that must be met in order to be eligible to supply the service.

The Professional Education Program (PEP) and Common Final Exam (CFE) have electives which prepare a candidate for the varied registration categories; however, if a candidate has not completed these electives during their education program, they will still have the opportunity to meet these requirements post-designation.

AUDIT ENGAGEMENTS

EDUCATION

Professional Education Examinations:

Successful completion of the assurance and taxation electives, including examinations. If not completed as a part of original certification, CPA is required to complete CPA Canada built-for-purpose course and exam or equivalent.

Final Examination:

Successful completion of an approved national final examinations (i.e. CFE). In the case of successful completion of the CFE, applicant must demonstrate depth in financial reporting and assurance.

Additional Education Requirements

CPAs who successfully completed the assurance and taxation electives (or built-for-purpose exam) more than five years before applying for PAF registration are required to take additional continuing professional development to ensure current knowledge with no less than one (1) course in each of the following:

- Accounting standards in the relevant framework(s)
- Canadian Auditing Standards (CAS)

CPAs must successfully complete CPA Alberta's "Overview of Public Practice" course (or a course deemed substantially similar by the CPA Alberta Registration Committee).

EXPERIENCE

Duration

24 months of full-time qualifying experience within the most recent five-year period. Qualifying experience must be gained through a professional accounting firm with a registered pre-approved program in external audit OR five (5) years of continuous full-time qualifying experience in a professional accounting firm registered to provide audit engagements.

Experience must be under the supervision of a member who practices in the area of audit.

Chargeable Hours

Demonstrate the following through a professional accounting firm deemed to provide qualifying experience for duration as noted above:

- 1250 assurance hours; of which a minimum of 625 hours must be obtained in audits of historical financial information

Competency

Applicant must provide evidence of:

- a core in the financial reporting competency area (requiring experience in at least three financial reporting competency sub-areas)
- a depth in the audit and assurance competency area (requiring that the competencies be developed in all three audit and assurance competency sub-areas, two at Level 2)

Diversity

Diversity of assurance experience to be gained through a variety of audit clients and/or a variety of audit experiences, a part of which may be gained through review clients, to the satisfaction of the Registrar.

REVIEW ENGAGEMENTS

EDUCATION

Professional Education Examinations:

Successful completion of the assurance and taxation electives, including examinations. If not completed as a part of original certification, CPA is required to complete CPA Canada built-for-purpose course and exam or equivalent.

Final Examination:

Successful completion of an approved national final examinations (i.e. CFE). In the case of successful completion of the CFE, applicant must demonstrate depth in financial reporting and assurance.

Additional Education Requirements

CPAs who successfully completed the assurance and taxation electives (or built-for-purpose exam) more than five years before applying for registration are required to take additional continuing professional development courses to ensure current knowledge with no less than one (1) course in each of the following:

- Accounting standards in the relevant framework(s)
- Assurance course covering Canadian Standard on Review Engagements (CSRE)

CPAs must successfully complete CPA Alberta's "Overview of Public Practice" course (or a course deemed substantially similar by the CPA Alberta Registration Committee).

EXPERIENCE

Duration

24 months of full-time qualifying experience within the most recent five-year period. Qualifying experience must be gained through a professional accounting firm with a registered pre-approved program in review and/or external audit OR five (5) years of continuous full-time qualifying experience in a professional accounting firm registered to provide review and/or external audit engagements.

Experience must be under the supervision of a member who practices in the area of assurance.

Chargeable Hours

Demonstrate the following through a professional accounting firm deemed to provide qualifying experience for duration as noted above:

- 1250 assurance hours; of which a minimum of 625 hours must be obtained in providing assurance of historical financial information

Competency

Applicant must provide evidence of:

- experience in at least three financial reporting competency sub-areas
- experience in at least two competency sub-areas (both at Level 2) from the audit and assurance competency area
- depth in one competency area (at their choice)

Diversity

Diversity of assurance experience to be gained through a variety of assurance clients and/or a variety of assurance experiences, to the satisfaction of the Registrar.

COMPILATION ENGAGEMENTS

EDUCATION

Professional Education Examinations:

Successful completion of the taxation elective, including examination. If not completed as a part of original certification, CPA is required to complete the tax elective from the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB), or equivalent.

Final Examination:

Successful completion of an approved national final examinations (i.e. CFE). In the case of successful completion of the CFE, applicant must demonstrate depth in financial reporting plus one other depth area.

EXPERIENCE

Duration

24 months of full-time qualifying experience within the most recent five-year period. Qualifying experience must be gained through a Pre-approved Program in a professional accounting firm OR through the Experience Verification Route gained in a professional accounting firm registered to provide any professional accounting practice services.

Experience must be under the supervision of a member who practices in the area of compilation.

Final Examination:

Successful completion of an approved national final examinations (i.e. CFE). In the case of successful completion of the CFE, applicant must demonstrate depth in financial reporting plus one other depth area.

Additional Education Requirements

CPAs who successfully completed the taxation elective more than five years before applying for registration are required to take additional continuing professional development courses to ensure current knowledge with no less than one (1) course covering compilation engagements.

CPAs must successfully complete CPA Alberta's "Overview of Public Practice" course (or a course deemed substantially similar by the CPA Alberta Registration Committee).

Chargeable Hours

Demonstrate the following through a professional accounting firm deemed to provide qualifying experience for duration as noted above:

- 625 hours in compilation

Hours spent on the audit or review of historical financial information are accepted as compilation hours.

Competency

Applicant must provide evidence of:

- experience in at least three financial reporting competency sub-areas
- depth in one competency area (at their choice)

Diversity

Additional experience in tax and advisory services to the satisfaction of the Registrar.

OTHER REGULATED SERVICES (INCLUDING PUBLIC PRACTICE SERVICES)

EDUCATION

Professional Education Examinations:

Where the member will be providing **taxation services**: successful completion taxation elective, including examination. If not completed as a part of original certification, the CPA is required to complete the tax elective from the CPAWSB, or equivalent.

All other regulated services **excluding taxation**: None

Final Examination:

Successful completion of an approved national final examinations (i.e. CFE).

Additional Examination:

Where the member will be providing **taxation services**: If taxation elective was not completed as a part of original certification, applicant must successfully complete the tax component of the CPA Canada built-for-purpose exam or equivalent.

All other regulated services excluding tax: None

Additional Education Requirements

Where the member will be providing **tax services**: Successful completion of no less than one (1) course in the area of tax specific to the nature of the business in the intended areas of practice

Where the member will be providing other regulated services, **excluding tax service**: evidence satisfactory to the Registrar of continuing professional development to the satisfaction of the Registrar or Registration Committee that the member has depth of knowledge required to provide services in the intended areas of practice.

CPAs must successfully complete CPA Alberta's "Overview of Public Practice" course (or a course deemed substantially similar by the CPA Alberta Registration Committee).

EXPERIENCE

Duration

24 months of full-time qualifying experience obtained through a registered professional accounting firm and within rolling five-year period. Experience must be under the supervision of a member who practices in the area(s) of practice.

Can a candidate meet the requirements for the varied registration model post-designation?

A candidate that did not pursue the public accounting path through the education and practical experience streams can meet the requirements of the Varied Registration Model post-designation (i.e. after becoming a member). Also, once admitted into membership, a candidate can expand on service offerings by meeting the requirements of additional varied registration categories post-designation (i.e. after attaining membership).

For example, if a candidate that, at the time of admission to membership, meets the registration requirements for the varied category of Compilation Engagements, wished to expand their services into Review Engagements, they could do so by meeting the requirements of Review Engagements as a member by gaining additional practical experience or education post-designation.

Can a candidate take the Post-Designation Public Accounting (PDPA) course and exam?

The Post-Designation Public Accounting (PDPA) program offers a way for Alberta CPAs who attained their designation without completing the education components for the public practice requirements the ability to meet this requirement post-designation.

Specifically, PDPA is for CPAs who did not complete their assurance or taxation component modules for public practice rights at the time of certification, and/or did not demonstrate the required depths on their Common Final Exam (CFE), but are looking to register to provide:

- **Audit or Review services:** the PDPA module and exam, which is comprised of assurance, taxation, financial reporting, finance, and strategy and governance, will meet the education component for the Varied Registration categories of Audit, Review, Compilation, and Other Regulated Services – Taxation.
- **Compilation or Taxation services:** the PDPA-Tax module and exam will meet the education component for the Varied Registration categories of Compilation and Other Regulated Services – Taxation.

A candidate is not eligible enroll in the Post-Designation Public Accounting (PDPA) course and exam until they are admitted to membership.

Need help?

General Inquiries

Calgary

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