

CPA PEP Module Examination

Frequently Asked Questions

Preparing for CPA PEP Examinations

1. Will completing all of the module activities, practice cases, and multiple-choice questions (MCQ)s sufficiently prepare me for the module examination?

The amount of study and research required, and the resources used, will depend on the candidate and their level of knowledge of the competency area or topic as indicated in the *CPA Competency Map* and *Knowledge Supplement*. Candidates are responsible for assessing their level of knowledge and completing the necessary research and work to improve it.

Each module's coverage includes entry-level knowledge, the knowledge gained in any previous modules and the current module — all of which are detailed in the CPA Competency Map and Knowledge Supplement.

It is also important to note that the module activities, practice cases, and multiple-choice questions cover many topics in the Competency Map, but they do not cover all of the topics. Candidates are expected to self-assess their knowledge against the Competency Map and fill in any gaps.

2. Are example examination cases available to help prepare for the module-end examinations?

Yes, example examination cases are available for each module. See the [CPA Canada website](#) to access example cases.

3. I am spending significantly longer than the one hour allocated to complete the practice cases. How will this affect me with the module-end examination?

The solutions for the practice cases are meant to be close to perfect. Candidates are not expected to be able to write a perfect solution under examination conditions. However, you may want to assess the source of your difficulties. It may be due to slow writing or a lack of technical knowledge. If it is due to slow writing speed then additional practice may be required. If it is the latter, your time on practice cases may be more efficiently spent in the debriefing process to further develop technical competencies in the case. The amount of research required by a candidate, the resources used, and the time it takes to debrief will depend on the candidate and their level of knowledge, as indicated on the *CPA Competency Map* and the *Knowledge Supplement*. Please refer to the *Candidate Guide* for more information on practice cases.

4. Are the weekly MCQs the same as what I will see on the examination?

The weekly MCQs are designed to assist candidates with the development of their technical knowledge as detailed in the *CPA Competency Map* and may be similar, but are not identical, to the MCQs candidates will see on the examination. The weekly MCQs are not reviewed or approved by the group that develops the examination.

5. Is the assessment of the module examination the same as the weekly assessment?

No, the weekly assessments for the module and the examination are not the same.

However, the module materials and the examination both evaluate candidates' technical and enabling competencies as detailed in the *CPA Competency Map*. As a result, the feedback on the module activities, practice cases and weekly MCQs are valuable for candidates to review to develop these competencies.

Prior to Writing the Examination

6. What are the requirements to be eligible to write a module examination?

Candidates enrolled in the full module must obtain a minimum percentage grade from the module activities and attend the workshop(s) to be eligible to write the examination. Grades are given for each of the online activities, and can be viewed under the *Grades* tab in D2L. For information on eligibility to challenge examinations, candidates should contact their provincial/regional body.

7. When will I be notified if I am eligible to write the examination?

Candidates who are eligible to write the examination will not receive notification; however, candidates who are not eligible to write the examination will be informed by their region/province. In other words, candidates should assume they are eligible to write the examination unless they are informed otherwise.

8. Where can I find the Examination Rules?

The examination rules can be found in the evaluations section of the [Certification Resource Centre](#) on the CPA Canada website.

9. Where can I find more information about the examination?

All examination related information, including exam regulations, exam rules, exam blueprints for each module, exam reference schedules and example cases are posted in the evaluations section of the [Certification Resource Centre](#). See below for more information on exam content and structure.

Examination Content and Structure

10. Is the examination based on the module material?

The module examination is designed to evaluate the competencies as outlined in the *CPA Competency Map*. Candidates are responsible for module coverage and any necessary prerequisite learning, as outlined in the *CPA Competency Map*.

11. What is the format of my examination?

The format of the examination differs by module. Refer to the examination blueprint posted on the [Certification Resource Centre](#) for information specific to your examination.

12. Are there any page limits for my responses on the case portion of the examination?

No. There is no page limit. Candidates are provided with a suggested amount of time to spend responding to the case portion of the examination. Candidates are responsible for managing their time over the entire examination (see the examination blueprint).

13. Should I write my name in my case response (such as part of a memo header)?

No, candidates must not include any indication of their identity in their case response, including their name. Candidate numbers will be used for identification purposes. Candidates may use “CPA” or “CPA Candidate” when referring to themselves in a memo.

Examination Day

14. What is the schedule on the day of the examination?

Candidates are generally asked to arrive at least one hour in advance of the examination start time (varies by province/region, so be sure to check). Since there are no breaks between question types, candidates must determine how to allocate their time appropriately, although CPA Canada will provide recommendations. Refer to the examination blueprint (posted on the [Certification Resource Centre](#)) for information on the length of the examination.

15. What reference material is provided during the examination (e.g. tax tables, etc.)

Two reference schedules have been developed—one for candidates writing the core examinations and another for those writing the elective module examinations. Refer to the examination blueprint and reference schedule posted on the [Certification Resource Centre](#) for specific information.

16. Will hard copies (paper copies) of the examination be provided to candidates?

Candidates will be provided with a hard copy of the examination and case portion of the examination in a booklet; however, you must record your answers to all portions of the exam in Surpass (*SecureClient*). Scrap paper will be provided at the back of the booklet, following the reference material (such as tax tables). The pages in the booklet cannot be removed, but candidates can write on and highlight the case as they wish. Prior to exiting the examination room, you must return the booklet.

Acceptable and Prohibited Materials

17. What type of calculator may I bring into the examination?



Candidates will be unable to bring any personal calculators to the examination. CPA Canada PEP-owned BAII Plus calculators will be provided to candidates at the examination centre for use during the examination and they will be collected at the end of the examination. The standard model used by CPA Canada is the BAII Plus from Texas Instruments.

Candidates should consider purchasing this version of the calculator to develop familiarity with it as they work through practice cases and assignments; however, as previously mentioned, personal calculators cannot be brought to the examination centre on examination day. The examination rules are posted on the [Certification Resource Centre](#).

18. Is the examination written on computers?

Yes. Candidates write the examination on their own PC laptops using the examination writing software. Information on the examination writing software can be found on the D2L module home page.

19. Can I use my Apple/Mac laptop?

No. Apple/Mac computers are not allowed because they are not compatible with the examination writing software. Candidates must write the examination on PC laptops using the examination writing software.

20. Can I use devices other than my laptop and the PEP-owned calculator during the examination?

Yes. Candidates are allowed to use a wired mouse and/or a non-powered, wired numeric keypad. Candidates cannot use a keyboard or wireless mouse.

Examination Results

21. Which module components are factored into my final module result?

Candidates must obtain a minimum overall grade to be eligible to write the examination (in addition to attending the workshop(s)). However, it is the module examination result only that determines whether a candidate passes a core or elective module and is therefore eligible to proceed to the next module. Please refer to the Candidate Guide in the CPA PEP section of the [Certification Resource Centre](#) for more information.

22. What information will I receive with my examination results?

Candidates will receive a transcript of their examination results and an interpretation letter. The transcript contains the Overall Result (Pass with distinction, Pass, Marginal pass, or Fail) and individual performance results on the objective format questions and the case portion of the examination. It is important that candidates read the interpretation letter, as it explains some of the fundamentals behind the transcript information.

23. What does the Overall Result ratings (i.e., Pass with distinction, Pass, Marginal pass, Fail) on my transcript mean?

The Overall Result identifies whether the standards set by the Board of Examiners were met for the examination written. The passing profile was developed in relation to “pre-established expectations set by the Board”, which varies across examinations due to different questions having different difficulty levels.

Based on performance results, each candidate group is ranked in one of four categories:

1. **Pass with Distinction:** Identifies the top performing group that wrote that specific examination.
2. **Pass:** Identifies the group that met the standards required based on a combination of the Objective Format Questions and the Case portions.
3. **Marginal Pass:** The classification given to the group that met the standards, but just barely.
4. **Fail:** Identifies the group that did not meet the standards set by the Board.

The *Fail* category includes a decile ranking. The higher the decile ranking the further away from the passing profile the performance results were. However, the *Fail* category does not identify a marginal fail. Therefore, when looking at transcripts it is sometimes difficult to see the difference between a marginal pass and a marginal fail transcript.

Candidates who fail or receive a marginal pass, should look at the areas where they performed poorly (objective format or case portion; or specific competency areas) and try to improve those areas for future examinations.

24. Will the information provided with my overall examination results explain why I failed?

Yes, it will. Generally, the areas where you obtained a Performance Level of "Not competent" (note that "Not addressed" is captured in this category) or "Reaching competent" would have contributed to a fail status; however, some areas will contribute more significantly than others. The blueprint requirements (provided in the interpretation letter and on the transcript) have a direct impact on how you interpret your results. You should focus your attention on the areas with the higher weightings on the blueprint and assess how you did there.

For example, on the Core 1 examination, 75% of the examination is Objective Format Questions and 25% is the Case, with 50-70% of the objective format questions covering the Financial Reporting competency area. If you obtained "Not competent" or "Reaching competent" for this particular area in the Objective Format Questions portion of the examination, it would have a significant impact on your overall results.

25. How do I use the information provided to help improve my performance, regardless if I passed or failed?

For both Core and Elective examinations, "Your performance" in each technical competency area (e.g., Audit and Assurance) is indicated by the shading of the Performance level for each area. This can be compared to the "Group performance", which represents the percentage of candidates writing this examination that attained each competency level for this examination. If the majority of the group was *Competent* and your ranking was *Reaching competent* or *Not competent*, then your performance in that area was weaker than the group of writers, indicating an area that needs improvement. In the example below, 66.1% (60.7% +5.4%) of candidates were able to demonstrate the competence standards set by the board, whereas this candidate was part of the 26.8% of the group who met the Reaching competent standard.

E.g. Core 1, Objective Format Questions- Audit and Assurance – Blueprint weighting 10-30%

| Your performance | Not competent | Reaching competent X | Competent | Competent with distinction |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Group performance | 7.2% | 26.8% | 60.7% | 5.4% |

For Elective examinations: Candidates who fail will be provided with a general description of the strengths and weaknesses that were demonstrated by the group population on that examination, including a description of areas where candidates need improvement, highlighting specific topic areas if evidence of technical weaknesses are noted.

26. I compared my overall results to that of my friend who wrote the same sitting of the examination, and I don't understand why I failed and my friend passed. The feedback portion of our transcripts look similar and yet we ended up with different overall results. How is that possible?

The Performance level categories (Competent with distinction, Reaching Competent, Competent, and Not competent /Not addressed) contain a large range of marks. Performance differences on one or more of the assessment opportunities within the competency areas reported will result in differences in actual examination scores (which could be the difference between a pass and a fail on the overall results). Since each competency area's reporting is a "roll up" of all the assessment opportunities in the competency area, the differences may not be apparent in the feedback information provided. Therefore, the transcript of a candidate who received a Marginal pass result could appear similar to that of a candidate who failed marginally (a *Marginal fail* results are not identified separately on the transcript, so candidates would only see the label *Fail*).

Elective examinations have two cases and the time allotted to answer and the number of assessment opportunities may differ from case to case, which affects how much each case is worth in the scoring. This, along with the fact that the feedback for a competency area is based on a weighted average affects the ability to compare one candidate's performance feedback to another.

27. I compared my overall results to that of my friend who wrote a different sitting of the examination, and I don't understand why I failed and my friend passed. The feedback portion of our transcripts looks similar. Why did we end up with different overall results?

Candidates should **not** compare the results and performance feedback from one examination sitting to another since the examination content and mix of questions are different. For example, the examination blueprint for Core 1 allows 10-20% of the objective format questions to be in the Taxation competency area. One examination may only have 10% of Taxation questions, while the other may have 20%. While both examinations are within the blueprint requirements, the different mix of questions affects the weighting of each competency area from examination to examination and therefore the results should not be compared. In addition, the Board of Examiners adjusts for the difficulty of the examination when setting the passing standard.

28. For Elective examinations, why doesn't the enabling skill feedback on the case portion correlate with my overall examination results? How should I use the information?

Your overall results are not linked to the enabling skills feedback. The intention of the enabling skills feedback is to help you improve your performance as you move through the CPA PEP and not to explain why you failed. Due to the non-disclosed restriction of the module examinations, enabling skills feedback is general in nature, and is provided to all candidates regardless if they passed or failed the examination.

The enabling skills feedback is prepared by the markers during the marking process. The interpretation letter provides a list of the feedback comments and the general guidelines that are applied by the markers. In general, markers will only note flaws they consider to be significant enough to bring to candidates' attention. [The BOE is currently looking at improvements to the enabling skills reporting.]

The information provided can and should be used, in conjunction with feedback you've received during the module(s), to identify areas of weakness in your examination writing skills (ability to identify issues, ability to do analysis is sufficient depth, ability to integrate facts into your analysis, ability to conclude a discussion with support, and ability to communicate clearly). Areas noted as weak for both cases are most likely the ones that require attention.

29. Under which circumstances should I consider appealing my examination results?

Candidates who failed an examination may consider submitting an appeal request. Before appealing, candidates should review the transcript results and consider how the information provided correlates with the feedback they have received throughout the module with respect to any weaknesses exhibited during the module. Candidates who achieved a performance level of Not Competent in competency areas with a heavy weighting, have a lower chance of success on appeal than if they were assessed at a Reaching Competent level. Consider the decile ranking provided. The higher the decile the lower the chance of success.

Candidates who experienced and reported issues with the software during the examination, and are concerned that part of their response(s) was missed, can consider submitting an appeal. All technical issues reported during the examination are reported to the Board of Examiners.

An appeal is a request to remark the examination. It is not an opportunity for candidates to provide information on other circumstances affecting them the day of the examination. For more information on the appeal process, review the interpretation letter you received with your transcript.

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

EXAM: Core 1 Examination

CANDIDATE NUMBER: EXAMPLE PAPER

1 OVERALL RESULT: MARGINAL PASS

2 DECILE RANKING: N/A

3 PERFORMANCE ON THE OBJECTIVE FORMAT QUESTIONS [Time allowed: 180 minutes]

Financial Reporting – Blueprint weighting 50-70%

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | 4 Not competent | Reaching competent | 5 Competent X | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 8.3% | 29.4% | 57.4% | 4.9% |

Audit and Assurance – Blueprint weighting 10-30%

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | Not competent | Reaching competent X | Competent | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 7.2% | 6 26.8% | 60.7% | 5.4% |

Taxation – Blueprint weighting 10-20%

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | Not competent | Reaching competent | Competent X | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 7.1% | 22.1% | 66.4% | 4.4% |

Finance – Blueprint weighting 5-10%

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | Not competent X | Reaching competent | Competent | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 10.7% | 19.7% | 64.0% | 5.5% |

7 PERFORMANCE ON CASE [Time allowed: 60 minutes]

Financial Reporting

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | Not competent | Reaching competent X | Competent | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 20.3% | 19.9% | 49.3% | 10.4% |

Audit and Assurance

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Your performance | Not competent | Reaching competent | Competent X | Competent with distinction |
| Group performance | 8.0% | 18.0% | 67.9% | 6.1% |

7 Feedback on the case is based on averaging the results for each competency area tested. There could be one or more assessment opportunities within each competency area. Keep in mind the blueprint when reviewing this section. For example, for Core 1, the blueprint specifies "Core 1 cases will assess competencies mainly in Financial Reporting, but will integrate one or two other competency areas. Although the cases will focus on Core 1, all prior learnings are also testable, i.e. Entry-level competencies." Therefore, the Financial Reporting performance has a heavy weighting in the scoring of the Core 1 case. The case component is worth 25% of Core 1 examination.

1 This is the **actual result** candidates obtained on the examination based on the Board of Examiner's passing profile. The standard is set by the Board based on pre-established expectations of what a candidate should be able to do for the questions/case presented.

2 Only candidates who fail the examination receive a **decile ranking**. The higher the ranking, the further the performance was from the cut score.

3 **Performance feedback** is provided on both portions of the examination: 1) Objective Format Questions and 2) Case. The feedback is based on a single cohort and does not correlate with the overall result, which is based on a set passing profile.

4 Candidate results split into **four performance level categories**, with large ranges, in order to provide feedback on the group's performance.

5 The shaded box reflects **your performance** on the examination. Focus on the specific feedback area and the overall weighting described in the blueprint. For example, for the Core 1 examination, the Objective Format Questions are worth 75% of the examination score, with 50-70% of the Objective Format Questions allocated to Financial Reporting.

6 The **group performance** identifies the average performance of the candidates who wrote this examination. By comparing *Your performance* to the *Group performance*, candidates can compare their individual performance with the majority of candidates. In this example, this candidate achieved Reaching competent while the majority of candidates (60.7%) were able to achieve Competent. Keep in mind that the Audit and Assurance section covered 10-30% of the Objective Format Questions when assessing how the performance in this section impacts your *Overall Result*.