



# **Skills for the Uniform CPA Examination**

**Effective Upon the Launch of the  
Computer-based Uniform CPA Examination**

**Prepared by the Board of Examiners of the  
American Institute of Certified Public Accountants**

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**April 14, 2003**

# **Uniform CPA Examination Skills Definitions-Weighting and Written Communication Policy**

The AICPA Board of Examiners (BOE) has approved skills definitions and established weighting scales for testing skills on the computer-based CPA Examination. The revised examination will also test written communication skills.

## **Skills Definitions**

Identification of the skills needed by entry-level CPAs was an integral component of the recently completed Practice Analysis. The skills identified as necessary for the protection of the public interest are: Analysis, Judgment, Communication, Research, and Understanding. The BOE has approved the following skills definitions:

### Definitions:

- ANALYSIS is the ability to organize, process, and interpret data to develop options for decision-making.
- JUDGMENT is the ability to evaluate options for decision-making and provide an appropriate conclusion.
- COMMUNICATION is the ability to effectively elicit and/or express information through written or oral means.
- RESEARCH is the ability to locate and extract relevant information from available resource materials.
- UNDERSTANDING is the ability to recognize and comprehend the meaning and application of a particular matter.

### ***Understanding, Analysis, and Judgment***

CPA candidates will be asked to demonstrate understanding, analysis, and judgment on the Uniform CPA Examination through questions that will require them to:

- Interpret and apply relevant professional literature.
- Comprehend professional standards and apply these standards during the course of an engagement.
- Recognize business-related issues and their relevance to evaluating an entity's financial condition.

- Evaluate, analyze, and process entity information for reporting in financial statements.
- Identify financial accounting and reporting methods and select those that are suitable.
- Address, analyze, and resolve issues in the conduct of an engagement.

### ***Communication***

Candidates will demonstrate their written communication skills through the use of short constructed response questions. Written communication skills will be tested in the context of specific subject matter. That is, a candidate will need to demonstrate written communication skills as well as demonstrate knowledge of the content. That means that a candidate who may write a grammatically correct response that is off topic, will not receive credit for the written communication. The accounting content will be at a level allowing candidates to adequately demonstrate enough knowledge and provide a sufficient writing sample, so that writing skills can be properly assessed.

An example of candidate instructions:

**Reminder:** Your response will be graded for writing skill in the context of specific subject matter. This response is to be written as a business letter. Do not convey any information in the form of a table, bullet point list, or other abbreviated presentation. Your response should include the conventions of a business letter, such as date, greeting, and closing.

### ***Research***

Candidates will demonstrate their research ability, searching the professional literature, identifying relevant information, and drawing conclusions.

An example of candidate instructions for a research question:

Use the Financial Accounting Research System (FARS) research materials available under the RESOURCES tab to find the answer to the following question in either the Current Text or the Original Pronouncements. Copy the appropriate citation in its entirety from the source you have chosen and paste it into the space provided below. Use only one source.

## Skills Target Weighting

The BOE has set the following target weights for the testing of each skill in each examination section. The percentages listed below represent the range of total test points associated with that skill for each section, and for the examination as a whole.

	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Judgment</u>	<u>Understanding</u>
Audit	10%-20%	6%-16%	12%-22%	12%-22%	35%-45%
Accounting	6%-16%	11%-21%	13%-23%	10%-20%	35%-45%
Regulation	0%-14%	9%-19%	9%-19%	8%-18%	45%-55%
BEC	0%-13%	0%-13%	8%-18%	6%-16%	55%-65%

For the computer-based CPA Examination, these skill weightings will be applied in conjunction with the content percentage ranges described in the Content Specification Outline dated June 14, 2002.

### Interaction of Content and Skills

Each question on the CPA examination is coded for both a specific content area and a specific skill. A correct response to a question provides information about the level of a candidate's knowledge in that content area and of the specific skill. The skills of analysis, judgment, and understanding are assessed in the multiple choice and simulation portions of the test; written communication and research are assessed only within the simulations. Each CPA examination includes questions, taken as a whole, that meet one hundred percent of the content weightings and one hundred percent of the skills weightings.

The matrices on the following pages illustrate the interaction between the weighting for skills and the weighting for content for each section of the CPA examination. As in the content specification outline, the Roman numerals identify the major content area within the exam section. The gray areas in each table represent the individual items, or questions, for that section. The weights are applied to each section as a whole, not on a question-by-question basis; therefore the total percentages for content weights are listed in the far right column in each table and the total percentages for skills weights are listed on the bottom row.

*Auditing and Attestation*

<b>Content Specification Outline Areas</b>	<b>Skill Categories</b>					<b>Content Weights</b>
	Communication	Research	Analysis	Judgment	Understanding	
I. Planning the engagement						22-28%
II. Internal controls						12-18%
III. Obtain and document information						32-38%
IV. Review engagement and evaluate information						8-12%
V. Prepare communications						12-18%
<b>Skills Weights</b>	10-20%	6-16%	12-22%	12-22%	35-45%	

*Financial Accounting and Reporting*

<b>Content Specification Outline Areas</b>	<b>Skill Categories</b>					<b>Content Weights</b>
	Communication	Research	Analysis	Judgment	Understanding	
I. Concepts and standards for financial statements						17-23%
II. Typical items in financial statements						27-33%
III. Specific types of transactions and events						27-33%
IV. Accounting and reporting for governmental entities						8-12%
V. Accounting and reporting for nongovernmental and not-for-profit organizations						8-12%
<b>Skills Weights</b>	6-16%	11-21%	13-23%	10-20%	35-45%	

Regulation

Content Specification Outline Areas	Skill Categories					Content Weights
	Communication	Research	Analysis	Judgment	Understanding	
I. Ethics and professional responsibility						15-20%
II. Business law						20-25%
III. Federal tax procedures and accounting issues						8-12%
IV. Federal taxation of property transactions						8-12%
V. Federal taxation - individuals						12-18%
VI. Federal taxation - entities						22-28%
<b>Skills Weights</b>	0-14%	9-19%	9-19%	8-18%	45-55%	

*Business Environment and Concepts*

<b>Content Specification Outline Areas</b>	<b>Skill Categories</b>					<b>Content Weights</b>
	Communication	Research	Analysis	Judgment	Understanding	
I. Business structure						17-23%
II. Economic concepts						8-12%
III. Financial management						17-23%
IV. Information technology						22-28%
V. Planning and measurement						22-28%
<b>Skills Weights</b>	0-13%	0-13%	8-18%	6-16%	55-65%	