

## How to Become a Licensed Public Accountant

### Frequently Asked Questions

(For Prospective Students and Students in the CGA Program of Professional Studies)

#### **What academic credentials do I need to qualify for the licensing path?**

You need to hold a four year university degree or a college's four year applied degree, with credit in 17 specified courses.

#### **Where can I obtain the 17 specified courses?**

You can obtain the specified courses through most Ontario universities. The courses can be taken as part of your undergraduate degree requirement or they can be taken post-degree. The courses are similar in content to the foundation and advanced courses in the CGA program. For a list of accredited courses please visit [www.cga-ontario.org/accredited](http://www.cga-ontario.org/accredited).

#### **What additional requirements do I complete in the CGA program to earn a public accounting licence?**

Once you complete the specified courses and hold a degree, you need to pass CGA Ontario's Technical Proficiency Exam (TPE), and complete Issues in Professional Practice (PA1) and Applications in Public Accounting (AP1), in that order. Passing these courses and exams and meeting the specified work experience will lead to the CGA designation and a licence to practise public accounting.

#### **Can you provide an overview of the Technical Proficiency Exam (TPE)?**

The TPE is a 125 question multiple choice five hour exam. The exam covers the content in the 17 specified courses; it is not associated with a specific course. The exam will be offered for the first time in December, 2010.

#### **Can you provide an overview of Issues in Professional Practice (PA1) course and exam?**

PA1 is a comprehensive, integrative case-based course. The content focuses on developing competencies in financial accounting, taxation, assurance, and leadership. There are eight assignments that are marked according to competencies. You must pass the assignments to qualify to write the exam. The four-hour exam, written during CGA Ontario's exam week, consists of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and a case study. Your final result (honours pass/pass/fail) is based solely on your exam performance.

#### **Can you provide an overview of Applications in Public Accounting (AP1) course and exam?**

AP1 is a comprehensive, integrative case-based course. Approximately 50 % of the content focuses on auditing and financial reporting with the balance consisting of competencies in ethics, finance, management accounting, and taxation. There are five assignments that are marked according to competencies (similar to PA1). You must pass the assignments to qualify to write the exam. The exam consists of two five-hour long segments, written on two separate days during CGA Ontario's exam week. Each segment consists of three cases. Your final result (honours pass/pass/fail) is based solely on your exam performance.

**Does my Laurentian University H.B.Com degree qualify for the licensing path?**

Yes, this degree qualifies. You will need to complete two additional audit courses before taking the Technical Proficiency Exam. The audit courses must be accredited by CGA Ontario and taken at an approved post-secondary institution in Ontario.

**Can I complete the 17 specified courses any place other than an Ontario post-secondary institution?**

Not currently. Post-secondary institutions from outside of Ontario will be added as they are assessed and accredited by CGA Ontario.

**What work experience do I need to qualify for a public accounting licence?**

You need to obtain work experience in a public accounting approved training office. Your work experience must span a period of 30 months and include 2,500 billable hours. The 2,500 hours must break down into the following:

- A minimum of 1,250 hours in assurance services of which,
  - A minimum of 625 hours must be in audit services and
  - A minimum of 100 hours must be in review engagement services
- A minimum of 100 hours in tax services related to the above assurance services
- 1,150 hours in other related services

This means that if your 1,250 assurance hours were all in audit services that you would not meet the requirements and would still need to obtain 100 review engagement services.

**What is a public accounting approved training office?**

An approved training office is specifically authorized to train students in public accounting. A public accounting firm must apply to its respective authorized designated body to obtain the approved training office status. If you are unsure about the status of the firm you are working for, ask your manager or a partner if the firm is an approved training office—they should know the answer—if they don't know then the firm probably isn't.

**How is my work experience assessed and how does the PEAQ fit into my assessment?**

The document used to assess your public accounting competencies and to record your time is the Public Accounting Competency Assessment Record (PACAR). The assessment of time and competencies completed and assessed must receive final sign off by a licensee in the firm you are working in. The PEAQ is **not** used to assess your public accounting competencies or your time.

**I work for a public accounting firm that is not an approved training office; will this experience count toward a licence?**

No, it will not. To qualify for a licence your work experience must be in an approved training office. However, for the purposes of obtaining your CGA designation your work experience is not restricted to an approved training office and can be obtained through a number of different avenues.

**I have a four year university degree and the specified accounting courses but do not work in public accounting; can I take the licensing path and obtain a public accounting licence?**

You need public accounting work experience as specified above to qualify for a licence. You can take this path for the purposes of obtaining your CGA designation; however, we do not recommend this as an option for those planning a career in other areas of the profession. This path focuses on public accounting and the regular path to a CGA designation may be better suited to your career goals.

**If I have completed the prerequisite course work and qualify to take the licensing path to obtain my CGA designation but do not have public accounting experience can I obtain a licence at a future date?**

Yes, provided you obtain the specified public accounting hours and months in an approved training office as described in the question:

**“What work experience do I need to qualify for a public accounting licence?”**

**I note that the licensing path sequence is: TPE → PA1 → AP1. Can I still take this path if I’ve already completed PA1?**

Yes; however, you will need to pass the TPE and then pass AP1. You will not need to repeat PA1.

**Will I need to take any of the courses from the licensing path if I do not want to be licensed as a public accountant?**

No; the courses in the licensing path are only for those students who want to obtain a public accounting licence. The regular path to a CGA designation is not altered by the addition of the licensing path to the program of studies.

**I work in an approved training office and have almost completed my CGA designation but do not have the 17 specified courses; can I still obtain a licence?**

You must first obtain your CGA designation. The Public Accountants Council has approved a council guideline that allows CGAs to satisfy their educational requirements through appropriate public accounting experience. To qualify you need to have at least five years of public accounting experience including the basic experience requirements as described in the question: **“What work experience do I need to qualify for a public accounting licence?”** You then need to pass the AP1 exam which would be written post certification.

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