



# CMA Handbook

Your Guide to Information and  
Requirements for CMA Certification



IMA's Certification for  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

***Welcome to the CMA Program!***

IMA® (Institute of Management Accountants) is dedicated to excellence within the management accounting profession. The CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) designation was developed in 1972 to provide an objective measure of an individual's knowledge and competence in the field of management accounting. Only the CMA program recognizes the unique proficiencies required for success in this challenging profession.

ICMA® (Institute of Certified Management Accountants) regularly reviews the content of the CMA exam to ensure that current topics are appropriately updated and relevant to business practice. Connectivity of a practical Body of Knowledge to the workplace is important. The CMA exam aligns with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that an accountant or finance professional in business uses on the job today—financial planning, analytics, control, and decision support. These skills are critical to the success of finance teams.

The CMA program has been designed to meet the evolving needs of business—today and tomorrow. We look forward to helping you achieve excellence as a professional. Certification will confirm your proficiency in your chosen field and your dedication to personal and professional growth.

If you have any questions, please contact us at:

1-800-638-4427 or 201-573-9000

Fax: 201-474-1606

Email: [ima@imanet.org](mailto:ima@imanet.org)

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By Institute of Certified Management Accountants

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information on the requirements for CMA certification. It also includes an overview of CMA exam content, registration procedures, scheduling exams, and the examination process itself. Candidates should familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook. As the information in this handbook is subject to change, we urge candidates to consult the online version regularly.

## **Board of Regents**

The Board of Regents of ICMA has overall responsibility for evaluating and validating CMA applicants' credentials; developing, administering, and grading the CMA examinations; and administering the continuing education requirements for participants. The Board consists of between 15 and 19 Regents who are appointed to serve three-year terms. Members of the Board are practitioners and educators in the field of management accounting and financial management.

## **Candidate Conduct**

All candidates are required to attest to the authenticity of their credentials (i.e., education, certification, and work experience documentation) and the accuracy of all statements made in their application. Falsifying credentials will result in expulsion from the CMA program and IMA.

All candidates must agree that they will not disclose the contents of the examinations nor remove examination materials from the testing room.

Cheating will not be tolerated, and all instances of suspected cheating will be fully investigated. Examinees who are caught cheating will have their grades invalidated and will be disqualified from future examinations. In addition, cheating is a violation of the IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Copying answers from another candidate during the exam.
- Helping another candidate during the exam.
- Removing exam materials from the testing room.
- Sharing questions that appeared on the exam.
- Bringing or using unauthorized materials into the testing environment, including study guides, written notes, published resources, or any other form of test aids, whether physical or digital.
- Taking photographs of exam questions during the test session.
- Memorizing exam content and later disclosing it to any individual or organization, including test preparation companies or other examinees.

The ICMA Board of Regents will make a final determination as to expulsion from the certification program.

For those already certified by ICMA, the subsequent discovery of cheating will be considered a violation of the IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice and will result in revocation of the CMA certificate and expulsion from IMA.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for CMA certification, you must fulfill all of the following requirements:

- Active membership in IMA
- Active CMA entrance fee
- Satisfy the education qualification
- Satisfy the experience qualification
- Complete all required examination parts
- Comply with the [IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice](#)

## **CMA Entrance Fee**

The CMA entrance fee for the certification program must be paid before taking the examinations. Candidates must complete the CMA program within three years from the date of entry into the program. If both exam parts are not successfully completed within three years of entering the certification program, any passed part will expire, and the CMA entrance fee will have to be repaid.

The CMA entrance fee includes:

- Access to the CMA support package beginning on the date of entry into the CMA program\*
- Final score report upon completion of exams
- Review of educational and experience credentials
- A listing of all CMAs in good standing on the IMA website for employer verification of status

\*Please note: The exam support package should be supplemented with a formal plan of study.

## **Education Qualification**

To become a certified CMA, candidates must satisfy one of the following education requirements and submit verification of education to ICMA within seven years of completing the CMA examination.

### **Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.**

- A partial listing of accredited international and U.S. institutions is available at: <http://univ.cc/world.php>.
- Degrees that are not accredited must be evaluated by an independent agency. A listing of these agencies can be found at [www.aice-eval.org](http://www.aice-eval.org) or [www.naces.org/members.php](http://www.naces.org/members.php).
- If you cannot locate your college or university on the accredited listing, please contact us at [CMAEducationdocuments@imanet.org](mailto:CMAEducationdocuments@imanet.org).
- Verification: All transcripts should be emailed directly from your college or university to the email address below.

### **Professional certifications**

- A listing of approved certifications can be found [here](#).
- Verification: An official letter from an approved certifying organization confirming you are a qualified member should be emailed directly from the certifying organization to the email address below.

CMA candidates must submit all required educational documents translated in English in a PDF format to [CMAEducationdocuments@imanet.org](mailto:CMAEducationdocuments@imanet.org) along with your IMA membership number. In the event we require the original, you will be contacted by ICMA directly.

Note: Documents are shredded six months after your CMA profile has been updated.

## **Experience Qualification**

Candidates for the CMA certification must complete two continuous years of professional experience in management accounting and/or financial management. This requirement may be completed prior to or within seven years of passing the examination. Teaching qualifies as related professional experience when it is full-time and at least 60% of the course load taught is accounting or finance above the introductory level over a two-year period. Professional experience is expected to be gained in full-time employment. However, continuous part-time positions of 20 hours per week meeting the definition of qualified experience will count toward this requirement at a rate of one year of experience for every two years of part-time employment.

Qualifying experience consists of positions requiring judgments regularly made employing the principles of management accounting and financial management. Such employment includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Preparation of financial statements
- Financial planning and analysis
- Monthly, quarterly, and year-end close
- Auditing (external or internal)
- Forensic accounting
- Budget preparation and reporting
- Managing general ledger and balance sheets
- Forecasting
- Company investment decision making
- Corporate financial management
- Cost accounting and analysis
- Risk evaluation
- Supply chain management
- Cost management
- Data analytics
- Management information systems analysis
- Development and delivery of financial systems
- Implementation and management of financial technologies
- Tax accounting, analysis, and planning
- Reporting to the SEC or other governmental regulators
- Strategic planning and strategic management
- Sustainability reporting
- Teaching management accounting or financial management at the college/university level

Employment requiring the occasional application of management accounting principles such as in computer operations, sales and marketing, manufacturing, engineering, personnel, and general management will not satisfy this requirement. Internships and trainee, clerical, or nontechnical positions do not provide appropriate experience to fulfill this requirement.

## **CMA Examination**

For the May/June 2026 testing window candidates may choose either essays or case-based questions for each exam part. This will be the final testing window where essays are offered for the English exam. \*

For the September/October 2026 testing window and beyond, case-based questions become the **standard format** for the CMA exam. Essays will no longer be available in English for the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Asia Pacific\* and Africa.

**\*China, Taiwan (China), and Japan will continue to offer essay questions on the English and local language exams.**

For information on the case-based questions please [click here](#).

CMA Candidates taking the CMA certification must complete all required examination parts.

- Part 1: Financial Planning, Performance, and Analytics
- Part 2: Strategic Financial Management

For the essay exam: (Note: Beginning in the September/October 2026 window, essay exams will only be offered in Japan, Mainland China, and Taiwan (China) exam.)

Each exam part will consist of 100 multiple-choice questions and two 30-minute essay questions. You will have three hours to complete the multiple-choice section and one hour total to complete both essays. The essays will be presented after you have completed the multiple-choice section of the exam or after three hours, whichever comes first. You must answer at least 50% of the multiple-choice questions correctly to be eligible to take the essay section. Once you complete and exit the multiple-choice section of the exam, you cannot go back. You must remain in the essay section to complete the exam. The essay section consists of approximately 10-12 written response or calculation questions based on two scenarios, describing a typical business situation.

You will not receive immediate pass/fail results because the essay questions will be graded off-line. This is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. In order to assure consistency, accuracy, and fairness, all papers are graded at the same time. Sample grading is performed first to ensure all alternative solutions have been accounted for. Reviewers check the grading throughout the grading process. The scores for the multiple-choice section will be added to the scores of the essay section for a total weighted score of pass/fail reflected in a scaled score for the entire part. Candidates are not required to “pass” both sections; the total score determines pass/fail status. Exam results will be emailed and posted to your online profile approximately six weeks from the end of the month in which you tested.

### For the case-based question exam:

Each case-based question (CBQ) exam consists of 100 multiple-choice questions and two CBQ sets. You will have three hours to complete the multiple-choice section and one hour total to complete both CBQs. The CBQs will be presented after you have completed the multiple-choice section of the exam or after three hours, whichever comes first. Candidates should plan to allocate approximately 30 minutes per item set for a total of 1 hour for this section. The CBQ section only becomes accessible after the multiple-choice section has successfully been completed with the candidate earning a minimum of 50% of points. If a candidate does NOT earn a minimum of 50% on the multiple-choice section, they will not gain access to the CBQ section. Once you exit the multiple-choice section, you cannot return to it.

### **Changes in GAAP/IFRS Policy**

Changes in GAAP and/or IFRS are reflected on the CMA exam one year after the effective date.

### **Examination Administration**

The CMA examination is administered in a computer-based format and is offered at Prometric Testing Centers located throughout the world. An up-to-date listing of all Prometric Testing Centers can be found at Prometric's website [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA).

Parts 1 and 2 are offered during the following three testing windows:

- January/February
- May/June
- September/October

Registrations for Parts 1 and 2 will close after the 15th of February, June, and October.

Register for an exam:

- Online at the online store.
- By calling 800-638-4427, or (201) 573-9000 with your credit card information.

### **Scheduling an Appointment for an Exam**

Once you have received authorization from ICMA, it is your responsibility to schedule your appointment. Log onto [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA) to schedule, confirm, reschedule, or cancel your appointment 24 hours, seven days a week. You will be given a confirmation number at the time you schedule an appointment; you should make note of this number.

ICMA is not responsible if you delay scheduling and there are no appointments available within your authorization period.

If you do not schedule an appointment or you do not appear for a scheduled appointment in the selected testing window, you will forfeit your exam fee.

## Rescheduling or Cancellation of a Scheduled Appointment

We understand that circumstances can change. Please read this policy carefully to understand your options and any applicable fees when managing your exam appointment with Prometric and ICMA.

Cancelling your appointment with Prometric does not generate a refund or an automatic approved test window change. It only allows you to have the possibility to reschedule the appointment for a different date in the **same** testing window.

If you cancel your appointment with Prometric in less than five (5) days of your appointment, you will forfeit your exam fees with ICMA, and you will need to purchase a new exam registration. If you cancel your exam within 5 to 45 days of the scheduled appointment date, Prometric will charge a cancellation fee. This fee cannot be waived.

If you wish to transfer your exam appointment to the **next testing window**, you will be charged a fee by ICMA. The request must be submitted to <https://www.imanet.org/about-ima/exam-switch-form> **no later than five days** before the scheduled appointment. This fee cannot be waived.

If you have a scheduled exam appointment, the appointment **must be canceled** before the transfer request can be processed. If your appointment is not canceled in time, we cannot switch your registration.

To cancel or reschedule your appointment online, please have your confirmation number ready and visit [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA). If you do not comply with the cancellation policy, you will be considered a “no show” and you will need to reregister with ICMA and repay the examination fee.

Prometric Rescheduling and Cancellation Policy		
When You Cancel/Reschedule	What Happens	Fee
<b>46 or more days</b> before the appointment	Rescheduling/cancellation permitted	<b>No fee</b>
<b>5 to 45 days</b> before the appointment	Rescheduling/cancellation permitted	<b>\$70 Prometric fee</b> (non-waivable)
<b>Less than 5 days</b> before the appointment <b>or</b> Fails to appear for the scheduled test <b>or</b> Arrives 30 or more minutes after the start of the scheduled test start time and is refused admission	Rescheduling/cancellation <b>not permitted</b>	<b>Full exam fee forfeited</b>

## Refund Policy

The CMA entrance fee is not refundable.

The examination fee is refundable within 30 days from the date you purchased the exam and if no appointment has been set with Prometric. A processing fee will be subtracted from the refund.

## **The Day of the Exam**

### **Prometric Testing Center**

- Arrive at the Prometric Testing Center 30 minutes before the time of your appointment. If you are more than 15 minutes late for your scheduled appointment, you will lose your scheduled sitting and be required to reregister at full cost.
- You will be required to sign the Prometric Log Book and provide a fingerprint.
- Bring valid forms of identification.
- Bring an approved calculator.
- Prometric will provide paper and a pencil.

You may be scanned prior to each entry into the test room to ensure you do not have any prohibited electronic devices. If you decline to be scanned, the test center administrator will be required to submit a report to Prometric and ICMA.

## **Identification Requirements**

A candidate must present proof of their identity to be permitted to take the CMA Exams. The name on your ID(s) must match **exactly** with the name on your authorization letter. Any changes must be made at least a week (7 days) prior to your first scheduled appointment.

Please note that your name will be displayed on your CMA certificate as it appears on your IMA Profile. **No changes** can be made to your name once you have completed the exams.

Below is a list of acceptable identification. You must present one primary ID **or** two secondary IDs to be permitted to take the exams.

All identification must be original. Photocopies and/or electronic downloads are **not** acceptable.

**PRIMARY** (one form of ID needed) – **Must be original, unexpired, include photograph and signature.**

Passport  
U.S. Passport Card  
Government issued National Country ID  
EU Identity Card  
Government issued driver's license

**OR**

**SECONDARY** (two forms of ID needed) - original and unexpired – one with a photograph, and one with your signature

Military ID Card  
PAN Card (India)  
Aadhar Card (India)  
Voter ID (India)  
Postal ID (Philippines)  
Bank ATM, debit, or credit card with signature

Photo must look like the candidate. Signature on ID must match the Daily Test Taker Roster.

**Note:** You will not be permitted into the examination without proper identification. If you are not granted access to the exam, you will be required to register again for the exam and pay the full fee. Without the above listed identification, you will not be able to test.

### **Calculator Policy**

Small battery- or solar-powered electronic calculators restricted to a maximum of six functions—addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square root, and percentage—are allowed. The calculator must not be programmable and must not use any type of tape. Candidates can also use Texas Instruments' BA II Plus, HP 10bII+, HP 12c, or HP 12c Platinum calculators when taking the exams. The Hewlett-Packard 10BII is valid, but no longer available for purchase. Candidates will not be allowed to use calculators that do not comply with these restrictions, and only one calculator will be permitted per candidate. Please note it is up to Prometric to make the final determination to accept a calculator.

If for any reason the candidate's calculator is not allowed at the testing center, the test site personnel can provide a calculator to the candidate, or the candidate can use the calculator application within the exam software.

### **Standard Setting**

The CMA examinations are criterion-referenced tests, meaning that they are used to determine whether a candidate meets a certain threshold or standard of performance. Accordingly, ICMA uses an accepted procedure designed for the purpose of determining the level of performance on the tests that actually constitutes passing. This procedure involves the collective judgment of a panel of subject matter experts within the fields of management accounting and financial management. Separate passing scores are established for all parts of the exams, and all pass/fail determinations are final.

### **Exam Equating**

Since the actual items on the CMA exams are different from test form to test form, the different forms of the exam will vary slightly in difficulty, in that some forms may contain somewhat more difficult questions than others. The same standard for passing the test is applied to all candidates, regardless of which form of the test they take. Thus, in order to maintain consistency in standards, ICMA uses techniques of statistical equating to determine the equivalency of exams. The purpose of equating is to ensure that the passing scores on all forms of the exams are equivalent in terms of levels of difficulty. In this way, the same standard is maintained for all candidates, regardless of when and which test form they take.

### **Scaled Scores**

All scores on the CMA exams are expressed as scaled scores, ranging from 0 to 500, with the passing score set at 360. The raw scores on the test (i.e., the number of items correct) are transformed to this scale for the purpose of maintaining uniformity and consistency in the way scores are reported, regardless of which test form a candidate may take.

### **Examination Awards**

Candidates for the CMA are eligible for examination awards based on the total score of Parts 1 and 2. To qualify for an award, you must pass each of the two parts on the first attempt and complete both parts within two months (January/February, May/June, or September/October).

## **Performance Report**

Performance reports are sent via email from Prometric to candidates who fail an exam part. Performance reports are emailed approximately 14 days after exam results are posted to the candidate's profile. Performance reports show the candidate's performance as satisfactory, marginal, or unsatisfactory for each of the key topic areas from the multiple-choice section of the exam as well as the overall performance on the essay section of the exam.

Please note: You cannot take an exam part more than one time during a testing window.

## **Candidate Confidentiality**

ICMA makes every effort to maintain candidate confidentiality. Individual score information is not released to third parties without written authorization from the candidate. Prior to certification, the names of all program candidates are kept strictly confidential. A complete listing of all CMAs in good standing is available on the website for employer verification of status.

## **ADA Compliance**

ICMA and Prometric Testing Centers are fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Applicants planning to take the examinations who have special needs as covered by the ADA should notify ICMA at least two months before they plan to take the exam and prior to scheduling an appointment. Applicants are reminded that modifications, accommodations, auxiliary aids, and/or services ("accommodations") can only be offered if they do not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test.

## **Continuing Education Requirements**

All CMAs (including CMA candidates who have not yet been awarded certification) are required to maintain their IMA membership in good standing.

The continuing education requirement is 30 hours per calendar year. Two hours of this requirement must be acquired in the subject of ethics each year. CPE requirements begin at the start of each calendar year once the certification is issued.

Credit will be given for subjects relevant to a management accountant's career development and related to employer needs. ICMA grants credit for programs sponsored by education organizations, employers, business organizations, and professional and trade associations. Programs may be in the form of college courses, seminars, workshops, technical meetings, self-study packages, or online courses. Further details can be found at [CPE Rules and Requirements](#).

## **Rights and Responsibilities of a CMA**

The maintenance of your certification is contingent upon fulfillment of the following obligations:

Complete 30 hours of Continuing Professional Education, including two hours of ethics.

Comply with the [IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice](#).

Pay the CMA Annual Fee, which covers active membership in IMA and the annual CMA Maintenance Fee.

CMAs are required to comply with all applicable local laws concerning the offering of accounting services to the general public.