HOW TO BECOME A CPA

What is a CPA?

A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is a financial professional who helps individuals, businesses, and other organizations plan and reach financial goals. CPAs work with major corporations, small neighborhood businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and other groups that require individuals with professional expertise and business acumen to perform with high ethical standards.

CPAs have met stringent education, examination, and professional experience requirements that are set by state boards of accountancy. Only individuals licensed as CPAs can offer public attestation opinions on financial statements and this audit function is the cornerstone of the profession.

Requirements to Become a CPA

Requirements to be licensed as a CPA are specific to each state. It is recommended that an initial license be obtained in the state in which the individual wishes to work. However, most states recognize CPA licenses obtained in other states and may grant a license by reciprocity. Information about the various state requirements is available at www.nasba.org/stateboards.

Although the requirements to qualify for a CPA license differ somewhat from state to state, the primary categories of requirements are the same and can be grouped into three areas known as the Three E’s: (A) Education, (B) Examination, and (C) Experience. The education and experience requirements may differ, but all states require successful completion of the Uniform CPA Examination (CPA Exam). Information about each of these areas is provided below, with focus on NY State requirements because the majority of Baruch students who become CPAs will work in NY.

A. Education

1. Education Requirements. To qualify for NY State licensure, applicants are required to have at least 150 semester hours of college or university education, including at least a bachelor’s degree, 33 semester hours of accounting and taxation, and 36 semester hours of general business coursework.

   The 33 semester hours of accounting MUST include courses in cost or managerial accounting, financial accounting and reporting, taxation, and auditing and attestation. (Courses in auditing and attestation MUST be taken in the upper division of undergraduate institutions or in a graduate institution.)

   The 36 semester hours of general business coursework vary and may come from the following areas: business statistics, business law, computer science, economics, finance, real estate, management, marketing, operations management, organizational behavior, business strategy, quantitative methods, and information technology and systems. Note that in order for courses from these areas to be acceptable, they must include business-related content.

   The curriculum must also include, either as stand-alone courses or integrated into other courses, the study of business or accounting communications, ethics and professional responsibility, and accounting research. Baruch’s and most other bachelor’s degree accounting major and master’s programs, include this material. Review the NY State Education Department Office of the Professions’ website for more information about
SPECIAL PROVISION: The NY State Board for Public Accountancy allows students to take the CPA Exam before completing the 150 semester hour education requirement to become a CPA as detailed above. Students can qualify to take the CPA Exam after completing AT LEAST:

120 semester hours of college or university coursework that must include courses in financial accounting, cost/managerial accounting, taxation, AND auditing and attestation.

Students who take and pass the CPA exam after meeting these minimal requirements must still meet the total 150 semester hours of education and work experience requirements to become CPAs.

2. Baruch’s Registered CPA Programs. The NY State Education Department has reviewed and approved some accounting programs as “CPA licensure qualifying” so students who complete such a program meet NY’s education requirement. Baruch offers three such programs:

   1. MS in Accountancy
   2. MS in Taxation, provided that the BBA is in Accountancy and included an auditing course
   3. MBA with an accounting major (primarily for individuals with non-business bachelor’s degrees)

3. Additional Information for Meeting the Education Requirements. It is possible to meet the education requirements by having taken the necessary hours and coursework at more than one college or university or at one that offers the required business and accounting course but does not have a CPA program registered with NY. When the necessary hours and courses are completed, transcripts for evaluation should be submitted as part of the CPA Exam application to CPA Examination Services (www.nasba.org/exams/cpaexam/newyork). Transcripts showing credits earned outside the US should also be submitted in accordance with instructions that are provided at that site.

Note: Baruch is not able to provide access to its accounting or tax courses to individuals who are not enrolled in one of its degree programs. Information about other schools in NY that can offer courses can be obtained either from the NY State Society of CPA’s (www.nysscpa.org) or schools within the CUNY system.

B. The Uniform CPA Examination (CPA Exam)

The CPA Exam consists of four sections:

   1. Auditing and Attestation (AUD),
   2. Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR),
   3. Regulation (REG) and

The CPA Exam is provided in a computerized format and is offered in the first two months of every calendar year quarter. Each section can be taken in any sequence and at any test site throughout the US, regardless of the state in which licensure is being sought. Refer to the Candidate Bulletin for information about the CPA Exam (www.nasba.org/files/2013/01/Candidate.Bulletin.pdf). The CPA Exam is very challenging and the format changes occasionally. It is essential that candidates review
Students are urged to consider taking a CPA review course prior to attempting the CPA Exam. Baruch’s Stan Ross Department of Accountancy, in association with Becker Professional Education, has a program to assist students to prepare for the CPA Exam at an affordable price while studying to be successful on the Exam. Contact the Accountancy Department for details and an application. Other companies that also offer courses and information can be found by searching CPA Exam review courses online.

**The Application Process**

Obtain instructions to apply for the CPA Exam ([www.nasba.org/exams/cpaexam/newyork](http://www.nasba.org/exams/cpaexam/newyork)) and submit the application with the appropriate fee to:

CPA Examination Services  
c/o NY Coordinator  
P.O. Box 198469  
Nashville, TN 37219-8469

If appropriate, complete the NY State Registered Program Form and present it to Baruch’s Registrar’s Office to request that an official transcript be submitted directly to CPA Examination Services.

Request that official transcripts be sent from any other colleges at which courses to meet the education requirement have been taken.

Expect to receive a Notice to Schedule (NTS) when eligibility to take the CPA Exam has been determined. This process takes approximately four weeks. The NTS will be sent by the method specified by the applicant: email, fax, or US mail.

Review the **Candidate Bulletin** for instructions on scheduling the CPA Exam.

Visit the Prometric website ([www.prometric.com](http://www.prometric.com)) for a list of area test centers at which the CPA Exam is given.

**Taking the CPA Exam**

Schedule and take the exam section(s) for which the initial application was submitted and approved within six (6) months of the date on the NTS, after which the NTS will expire. IF the NTS expires, the application process will be voided and must be restarted.

Review the sample and tutorial tests ([www.cpa-exam.org](http://www.cpa-exam.org)) and the **Candidate Bulletin**.

Take and pass all four sections of the CPA Exam within eighteen (18) months from the date on which the first section was passed.
C. The Professional Experience Requirement

In addition to meeting the education requirement and passing all four sections of the CPA Exam, candidates for licensure must complete at least one year of acceptable work experience that will be evaluated by the NY State Board for Public Accountancy. Experience may be completed before or after taking the CPA Exam and is not related to qualifying to take the CPA Exam. Consult the website for current information: www.op.nysed.gov/prof/cpa/cpalic.htm#exp.

Applying for NY State CPA Licensure

Applications for NY State CPA licensure should be submitted after completing the education requirement, passing the CPA Exam, and nearing completion of the professional experience requirement. Application forms and instructions, including information about documenting professional education, are available at www.op.nysed.gov/prof/cpa/cpaforms.htm.

Complete the application for licensure and registration (Form 1) and submit it with the current $377 licensure fee to:

    NY State Education Department
    Division of Professional Licensing Services
    P.O. Box 22063
    Albany, NY 12201

Applications will be processed and notification of completion sent within eight weeks.

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