



Activity Review

North Carolina State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners

1101 Oberlin Rd., Ste. 104 • PO Box 12827 • Raleigh, NC 27605 • 919-733-4222 • www.nccpaboard.gov • No. 02-2014

What Is a Concentration in Accounting?

21 NCAC 08A .0309 states, in part, that a concentration in accounting must include at least 30 semester hours, or the equivalent in quarter hours, of undergraduate accountancy courses which shall include no more than six (6) semester hours of accounting principles and no more than three (3) semester hours of business law.

To be eligible to sit for the Exam, applicants must possess a bachelor's degree in any subject, from a regionally accredited college or university, that either includes or is supplemented by a concentration in accounting as defined in 21 NCAC 08A .0309. One of the most frequently asked questions about the concentration in accounting refers to the stipulation that no more than six (6) semester hours of accounting principle coursework may be counted toward the 30 semester hour requirement.

Fifteen of the 34 North Carolina colleges and universities that offer a four-year degree in accounting still call introductory accounting courses "Accounting Principles I and II." The other 19 schools use names such as "Introduction to Financial Accounting," "Introduction to Managerial Accounting," or similar names. Regardless of the course titles, these courses are introductory level accounting courses.

A number of colleges, universities, and community colleges give four (4) semester hours credit for these introductory courses. However, for the Board's purposes, these introductory accounting courses are limited to three hours credit each and no more than six (6) hours of the accounting concentration.

A similar question concerns "pre-accounting" courses offered by some schools. These courses are generally one (1) or two (2) semester hours and serve as introductory courses to the accounting program and are completed before courses such as "Accounting Principles I and II," "Financial Accounting," or "Managerial Accounting," etc.

Again, these courses are at the introductory or principle level and can only be counted toward the six (6) semester hours of accounting principles portion of the 30 semester hour requirement — any additional hours of principle-level coursework cannot be used to meet the concentration in accounting requirement. However, these courses may be counted toward the 150 semester hour requirement for licensure.

Unfortunately, a few Exam applications have been denied because the individuals incorrectly included more than six (6) semester hours of accounting principles when calculating their compliance with the 30 semester hour requirement. These applicants must take additional courses to fulfill the concentration in accounting requirement to become eligible to sit for the Exam.

Duplicate coursework is also a problem for some Exam applicants. For example, some colleges and universities offer a single tax course that covers both individual and business tax return preparation. A student completes that course, but chooses to take a business tax return preparation course at another school. Because the coursework is duplicative (the business-only tax preparation course supersedes the combined individual/business tax preparation course), only one of the courses may be counted toward the 30 semester hour requirement. Applicants who include the credit hours for both courses may be ineligible to sit for the Exam because they, in fact, do not have a concentration in accounting. Applicants must consider the content of courses, not just the course names, when calculating compliance with 21 NCAC 08A .0309 and 21 NCAC 08F .0302.

While finance, management, marketing, computer, economics and writing classes may be essential components of a school's degree program, such classes are not acceptable for the concentration in accounting. In addition, accounting internships and Exam preparation courses, while highly beneficial to the student, are not eligible for credit toward the 30 semester hour requirement. Exam applicants and educators are encouraged to review the Board's rules regarding the education requirement for the Uniform CPA Exam.

If you have questions regarding the concentration in accounting or other Exam requirements, please contact the Board's Deputy Director, David Nance, CPA, by email at dnance@nccpaboard.gov, or contact the Board's Executive Director, Robert N. Brooks, by email at rbrooks@nccpaboard.gov.