

# Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality ®

## 2017 International Candidate Examination Handbook



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## **It is the candidate's responsibility to read and understand the contents of this handbook before applying for the examination.**

This handbook contains current information about the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® (CPHQ) certification examination developed by the Healthcare Quality Certification Commission (HQCC). It is essential that you keep it readily available for reference until you are notified of your performance on the examination. All previous versions of this handbook are null and void.

For address changes, requests for a current candidate handbook, and information about the development and administration of the CPHQ examination, certification program, and recertification, direct correspondence to

### **Certification/Recertification**

HQCC Headquarters 8735 W. Higgins Road Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60631, USA

For general inquiries and questions about the exam or recertification, contact HQCC by phone at 800.966.9392, fax 847.375.6320, or E-mail: [info@cphq.org](mailto:info@cphq.org).

Candidates can register for the examination online at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org).

### **Affiliation**

HQCC, previously known as the Healthcare Quality Certification Board (HQCB), is the certifying arm of the not-for-profit National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ), which was formed in 1976 to advance the profession of healthcare quality through the development of a certification program. HQCC establishes policies, procedures, and standards for certification and recertification in the field of healthcare quality. The granting of CPHQ status by HQCC recognizes professional and academic achievement through the individual's participation in this voluntary certification program.

### **Accreditation**

The CPHQ certification program is fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accrediting arm of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), Washington, DC.

### **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

The certification examination is offered to all eligible candidates, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, or disability. Neither NAHQ nor AMP, a PSI business, the examination service provider, discriminates on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Introduction to the CPHQ Program

The purpose of certification in the healthcare quality field is to promote excellence and professionalism. The program certifies individuals who demonstrate their knowledge and expertise in this field by passing a written examination. The CPHQ designation provides the healthcare employer and the public with the assurance that certified individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in healthcare quality to perform competently.

The high standards of the certification program are ensured by the close working relationships among NAHQ, HQCC, healthcare quality professionals, and testing experts. HQCC adheres to NCCA standards in the development and implementation of its certification program.

The certification program is not designed to determine who is qualified or who shall engage in healthcare quality activities. The goal is to promote excellence and professionalism by documenting individual performance as measured against a predetermined level of knowledge about quality. All CPHQ's are expected to comply with NAHQ's code of ethics in spirit and action. A cooperative effort by HQCC, PSI, and practicing healthcare quality professionals has resulted in the definition of tasks significant to the practice of quality. These competencies are included in the certification examination. The examination materials are developed by practicing healthcare quality professionals and HQCC.

## Examination Services

NAHQ contracts with PSI to provide examination services internationally or outside of the United States and its territories. PSI carefully adheres to industry standards for development of practice-related, criterion-referenced examinations to assess competency and is responsible for administering the certification exam and scoring and reporting examination results.

Questions related to the examination should be referred to

PSI/AMP  
CPHQ Examination  
18000 W. 105th Street  
Olathe, KS 66061-7543

USA 913.895.4600  
Fax: 913.895.4650  
Email: [info@goAMP.com](mailto:info@goAMP.com)  
[www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com)

## Objectives of Certification

The objectives of the certification program for quality professionals are to

1. Promote professional standards and improve the practice of quality
2. Give special recognition to those professionals who demonstrate an acquired body of knowledge and expertise in the field through successful completion of the examination process
3. Identify acceptable knowledge of the principles and practice of healthcare quality for employers, the public, and members of allied professions
4. Foster continuing competence and maintain the professional standard in healthcare quality through the recertification program.

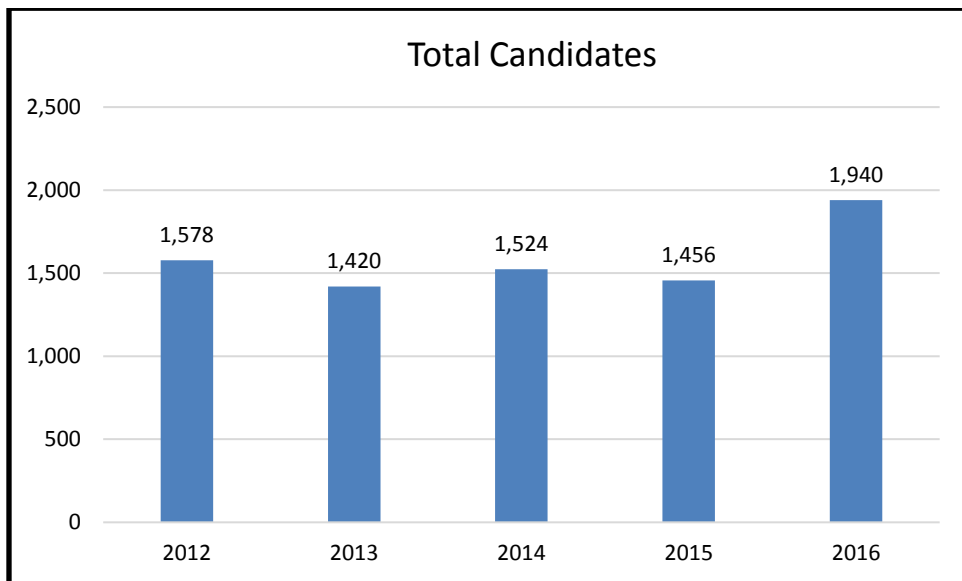
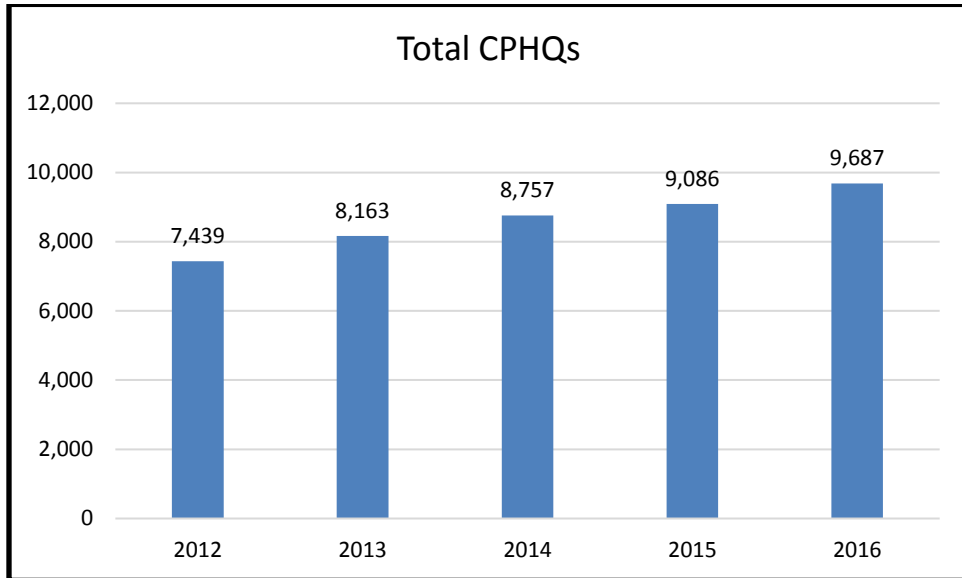
## Definition of the Quality Professional

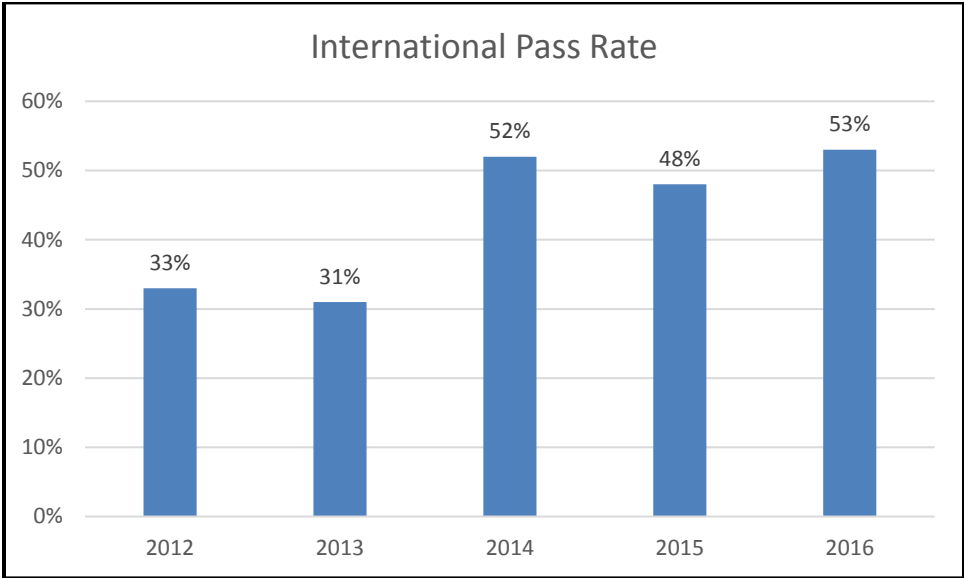
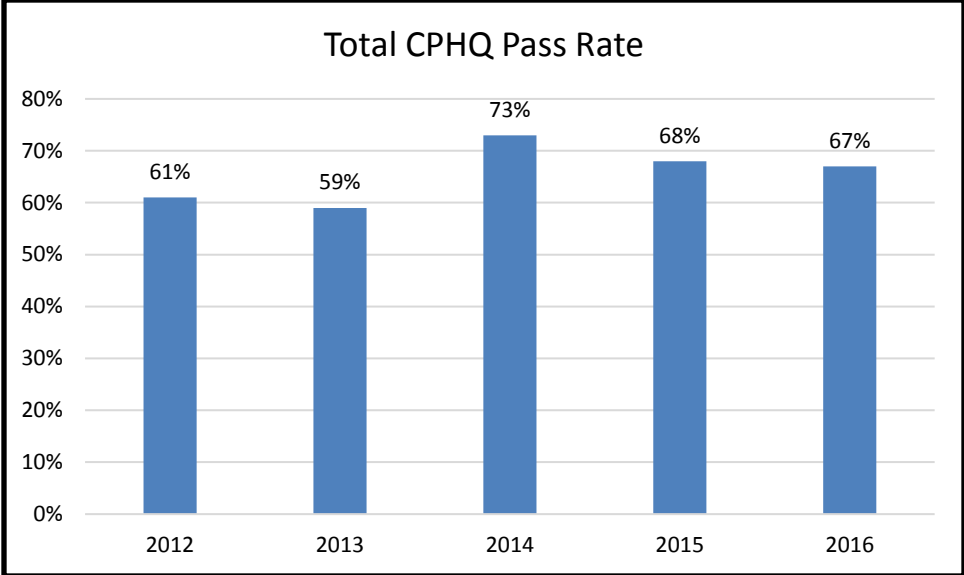
The practice of quality occurs in all healthcare settings, is performed by professionals with diverse clinical and nonclinical educational and experience backgrounds, and involves the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the tasks significant to practice in the CPHQ examination content outline. (Refer to the Examination Content Outline on page 23)

**A Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ) is**  
an individual who has passed the accreditation examination, demonstrating competent knowledge, skill, and understanding of program development and management, quality improvement concepts, coordination of survey processes, communication and education techniques, and departmental management.

HQCC's goal is to produce examinations that test generic concepts that can be applied to any healthcare setting. Candidates who pass the CPHQ examination must also understand how all of these important elements of quality and case/care/disease/utilization/risk management, as well as data and general management skills, integrate to produce an effective and efficient system to monitor and improve care.

## CPHQ Statistics





## **Certification**

To become certified, each quality professional must pass the CPHQ examination. The examination is available in computer-based format at assessment centers in the United States and multiple international locations. Certified professionals are entitled to use the designation “CPHQ” after their names. Certification in quality is effective on the date you pass the examination. The credential is valid from the time you receive your certificate through a 2-year period, which begins on January 1 of the year following the date you pass the examination. Candidates who do not achieve a passing score or whose cycle of eligibility has expired must submit a new application.

International certificants will receive an electronic certificate approximately 3–4 weeks after scores are released. A printed certificate and a CPHQ pin can be purchased at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org).

## **Recertification**

Following successful completion of the certification examination, the CPHQ is required to maintain certification by fulfilling continuing education (CE) requirements, which are reviewed and established annually by HQCC. The current requirements include obtaining and maintaining documentation of 30 CE hours over the 2-year recertification cycle—beginning January 1 of the year following the date you passed the exam—and payment of a recertification fee. All CE must relate to areas covered in the most current examination content outline. Current employment in the quality field is not required to maintain active CPHQ status. The process for obtaining recertification is described on the website at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org).

## **Eligibility Requirements**

All candidates have complete access to the examination process. Those who aspire to excel and demonstrate their competency in the field of healthcare quality have a chance to do so and achieve certification.

After years of extensive experience in testing research and development, and after observing the extraordinarily diverse backgrounds of exceptional candidates who have been successful on the examination and as CPHQs, the commission is confident that the carefully crafted CPHQ examination will differentiate between candidates who are able to demonstrate competence and those who are not. It is with this confidence that HQCC celebrates the elimination of barriers such as minimum education and experience requirements that are not objectively linked to success on the examination and effectiveness as a healthcare quality professional.

Candidates must take time to assess and judge their own readiness to apply to take the CPHQ examination, particularly if they have not worked in the field for at least 2 years. A careful review of all available information about the tasks covered in the CPHQ examination content outline, sample examination questions, reference list, and any other available data is essential before making the decision to apply for the examination.

The examination committee develops and writes the examination to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities of effective quality professionals who have been performing a majority of the tasks on the examination outline for at least 2 years. The examination does not test at the entry level and is not appropriate for entry-level candidates. If the candidate is new to healthcare quality, has worked in the field less than 2 years, or his or her experience as a quality manager was not specifically related to healthcare, HQCC cautions that the candidate may not be ready to attempt the examination. Refer to the content outline later in this handbook for detailed content information and other tools to assess readiness.



## **About the Examination**

The CPHQ examination is the only fully accredited, standardized measurement of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of competent healthcare quality professionals. The examination is available in a computerized format on a daily basis at PSI Test Centers.

The certification examination is an objective, multiple-choice examination consisting of 140 questions. Of these questions, 125 are used in computing the score, as discussed later in this handbook. The following percentage guidelines are used in selecting the three types of questions that appear on each examination: 26% recall, 57% application, and 17% analysis. Recall questions test the candidate's knowledge of specific facts and concepts. Application questions require the candidate to interpret or apply information to a situation. Analysis questions test the candidate's ability to evaluate, problem solve, or integrate a variety of information and judgment into a meaningful whole.

## **Pretest Questions on the Examination**

In addition to the 125 scored questions, CPHQ examinations also include an additional 15 pretest questions. You will be asked to answer these questions; however, they will not be included in the scored examination result. Pretest questions will be disbursed within the examination, and you will not be able to determine which of the questions are being pretested and which will be included in your score. This is necessary to ensure that candidates answer pretest questions in the same manner as they do scored questions. This allows the question to be validated as accurate and appropriate before it is included as a measure of candidate competency.

The examination content is based upon a practice analysis conducted every 3 years to ensure the content is current, practice-related, and representative of the responsibilities of healthcare quality professionals. Participants in the practice analysis survey must have completed a minimum of 1 year working in healthcare quality, case/care/disease/utilization/ risk management for their responses to be included in the research.

# THE CPHQ INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATION

## Examination Administration

The CPHQ exam is offered internationally four times during the year.

- March 19 – April 1, 2017
- July 9 – July 22, 2017
- September 5 – September 19, 2017
- December 3 – December 16, 2017

## Assessment Center Locations

PSI Test Centers have been selected as CPHQ testing sites to provide accessibility to the most candidates in all states and major metropolitan areas. A current listing of PSI Test Centers may be viewed at

<http://online.goAMP.com/CandidateHome/assessmentCenterNetworkLocations.aspx>. Specific address information will be provided when you schedule an examination appointment.

## Special Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities

PSI complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and strives to ensure that no individual with a disability—as defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment—is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. PSI will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities. Candidates requesting special accommodations must notify PSI at the time of application and scheduling.

1. Candidates must advise PSI at the time of scheduling that wheelchair access is necessary.
2. Candidates with visual, sensory, physical, or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements and will be reviewed by PSI.

Verification of the disability and a statement of the specific type of assistance needed must be made in writing to PSI at least 45 calendar days prior to your desired examination date by completing the Request for Special Examination Accommodations and Documentation of Disability-Related Needs forms (p. 29). PSI will review the submitted forms and will contact you regarding the decision for accommodations.

## Applying for and Scheduling an Examination

Exam Window	Application Deadline*
March 19 – April 1, 2017	November 19 – March 3, 2017
July 9 – 22, 2017	March 4 – June 23, 2017
September 5 – 19, 2017	June 24 – August 18, 2017
December 3 – 16, 2017	August 19 – November 17, 2017

\*Applications must be submitted by no later than 5:00pm Central Time by the deadlines listed above.

1. Online Application and Scheduling: You may complete the application process online by visiting [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org) and selecting "International Exam." The instructions will guide you through the application process. After the application information and credit card payment (VISA, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover) have been submitted, you will receive an e-mail in approximately 10 business days from PSI with instructions on how to schedule your exam. Upon payment, you will have 90 days to schedule and sit for the exam.

**OR**

2. Check: Complete the online application and mail your check for appropriate fees to HQCC/NAHQ. Please note that there is an additional \$25 fee for payment by check. HQCC will process your check and within approximately 2 weeks you will receive a confirmation notice including an email address and toll-free telephone number to contact PSI to schedule an examination appointment. If eligibility cannot be confirmed, notification why the application is incomplete will be sent. If a confirmation of eligibility notice is not received within 4 weeks, contact PSI at 888.519.9901.
3. You will receive an email from [AMPIntlExamServices@goAMP.com](mailto:AMPIntlExamServices@goAMP.com) with information to schedule your exam. You will need to reply to this email with the below information:
  - a. First and Last Name as provided on your application
  - b. Examination name-CPHQ
  - c. Preferred e-mail address
  - d. Cell phone number
  - e. Preferred Assessment Center location from the list of international testing centers on the HQCC examination page of [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com)
  - f. Three test dates you are available to test, in order of preference.

Be sure to include "CPHQ Examination" in the subject. Submit this information approximately two to four weeks prior to the requested exam dates.

*If special accommodations are being requested, complete the Request for Special Examination Accommodations form included in this handbook and submit it to PSI at least 45 days prior to the desired examination date.*

## Rescheduling an Examination

If you have already scheduled your date and time for the exam, you may reschedule your appointment ONCE at no charge by calling PSI at 888-519-9901 at least 2 business days prior to your scheduled appointment. You will forfeit fees if you fail to contact PSI at least 2 business days prior to the scheduled date and if you fail to report for examination.

If your examination is scheduled on...	You must call PSI by 3 pm CT to reschedule the examination by the previous...
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday
Friday/ Saturday	Tuesday

**If you need to reschedule to another testing window, please follow the Transfer instructions below.**

### Transfer of Eligibility

If you are unable to schedule an exam date during the testing window for which you applied, you are allowed ONE transfer to the next exam window, you will need to contact PSI at [AMPIntlExamServices@goAMP.com](mailto:AMPIntlExamServices@goAMP.com) to process this request. You are only allowed to change your exam window one time. Requests to transfer, along with your requested exam dates, must be received prior to the application deadline for that window.

If you do not postpone by the timeframe above, your original valid test window will not change. If you do not complete the exam by your valid test window you will be required to submit a new application and pay all associated fees.

**All fees are nonrefundable.**

### Missed Appointments

You will forfeit your examination registration and all fees paid to take the examination under the following circumstances:

- You cancel your examination after confirmation of eligibility is received.
- You wish to reschedule an examination but fail to contact PSI at least 2 business days prior to the scheduled testing session.
- You wish to reschedule a second time.
- You appear more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- You fail to report for an examination appointment.

A new, complete application and examination fee are required to reapply for the examination.

**No Refunds**

Fees are nonrefundable. Declined credit cards will be subject to a \$25 handling fee. A certified check or money order for the amount due, including the handling fee, must be sent to HQCC/NAHQ to cover declined credit card transactions.

**Inclement Weather, Power Failure, or Emergency**

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination, PSI will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation, and subsequent rescheduling, of an examination. The examination will usually not be rescheduled if the assessment center personnel are able to open the assessment center.

Visit PSI's website at [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com) prior to the examination to determine if PSI has been advised that any assessment centers are closed. Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled at an assessment center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification following the examination regarding rescheduling or reapplication procedures.

If power to an assessment center is temporarily interrupted during an administration, your examination will be restarted. The responses provided up to the point of interruption will be intact, but for security reasons the questions will be scrambled.

# RULES FOR COMPUTERIZED TESTING

## Taking the Examination

Your examination will be given by computer at a PSI assessment center. You do not need any computer experience or typing skills to take your examination. On the day of your examination appointment, report to the assessment center no later than your scheduled testing time. Look for signs indicating PSI assessment center check-in. **If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, you will not be admitted.**

## Identification

To gain admission to the assessment center, you must present two forms of identification, one with a current photograph. Both forms of identification must be valid and include your current name and signature. No forms of temporary identification will be accepted. You will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity. You **MUST** bring one of the following:

- driver's license with photograph
- state identification card with photograph
- passport
- military identification card with photograph

The second form of identification must display your name and signature for signature verification (e.g., credit card with signature, social security card with signature, employment or student ID card with signature). If your name on these documents is different than it appears on your identification, you must bring proof of your name change (e.g., marriage license, divorce decree, or court order).

## Assessment Center Security

PSI administration and security standards are designed to ensure all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The assessment center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- Examinations are proprietary. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, or cellular phones are allowed in the testing room. Possession of a cellular phone or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.
- Calculators are not necessary as all calculations found on the examination can be performed without the aid of a calculator. However, if you wish to do so you are permitted to bring a personal calculator and use it during the examination. The only type of calculator permitted is a simple battery-powered pocket calculator that does not have an alphanumeric keypad, and does not have the capability to print or to store or retrieve data. You **MUST** present your calculator to the examination proctor for inspection **PRIOR** to the start of the examination. Using a calculator during the examination that has **NOT** been inspected may result in dismissal from the examination.
- No guests, visitors, or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.
- Candidates may be subjected to a metal detection scan upon entering the examination room.

## **Personal Belongings**

No personal items, valuables, or weapons should be brought to the assessment center. Only wallets and keys are permitted. Coats must be left outside the testing room. You will be provided a soft locker to store your wallet and/or keys with you in the testing room. You will not have access to these items until after the examination is completed. Please note the following items will not be allowed in the testing room except securely locked in the soft locker:

- watches
- hats

Once you have placed everything into the soft locker, you will be asked to pull out your pockets to ensure they are empty. If all personal items will not fit in the soft locker you will not be able to test. The site will not store any personal belongings.

If any personal items are observed in the testing room after the examination is started, the administration will be forfeited.

## **Examination Restrictions**

- Pencils will be provided during check-in.
- You will be provided with one piece of scratch paper at a time to use during the examination, unless noted on the sign-in roster for a particular candidate. You must return the scratch paper to the supervisor at the completion of testing, or you will not receive your score report.
- No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the assessment center.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- Eating, drinking, or smoking will not be permitted in the assessment center.
- You may take a break whenever you wish, but you will not be allowed additional time to make up for time lost during breaks.

## **Misconduct**

If you engage in any of the following conduct during the examination you may be dismissed, your scores will not be reported, and examination fees will not be refunded. Examples of misconduct are when you

- create a disturbance, are abusive, or otherwise uncooperative
- display or use electronic communications equipment such as cellular phones
- talk or participate in conversation with other examination candidates
- give or receive help or are suspected of doing so
- leave the assessment center during the administration
- attempt to record examination questions or make notes
- attempt to take the examination for someone else
- are observed with personal belongings
- are observed with notes, books, or other aids without it being noted on the roster

## **Candidate Responsibility**

As a CPHQ candidate, it is your responsibility and duty to report suspicious or inappropriate activity both inside and outside of the testing center. Suspicious activity includes, **but is not limited to**

- the dissemination of exam questions or other copyrighted works either in the testing center, electronically, or through other channels (including the memorization and subsequent distribution of items)
- attempting to steal content from the testing center
- sharing information or answers to the exam at the testing site, electronically, or through other channels
- obtaining the questions in advance of the examination
- providing the questions to other candidates in advance of the examination
- taking, or trying to take, an exam for someone else
- allowing someone to take an exam on your behalf
- taking unauthorized notes or study aids into the examination
- using your cell phone or other devices to store or receive information and referring to this information during the examination
- conferring with candidates during the examination
- allowing another candidate to look at your exam
- attempting to cheat on the exam in any other way

Alerting NAHQ and HQCC of this activity protects the integrity of the credential you have worked hard to achieve. Breaches of copyright and conduct impact the value that the CPHQ holds, and it is your responsibility to report such breaches to maintain the high standards of the credential. Exam content is the copyrighted work of NAHQ, and breach of copyright is illegal and punishable by law.

Report all incidents of breach of conduct to **NAHQ** by mail at 8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60631, USA, by email at [info@cphq.org](mailto:info@cphq.org), or call 800.966.9392.

## **Copyrighted Examination Questions**

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of NAHQ. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. This includes posting exam questions to social media or other networking sites/ internet sites. This constitutes a test security and copyright violation. Doing so may subject the candidate to severe civil and criminal penalties and jeopardize your credential. See pg. H for the full disciplinary policy.

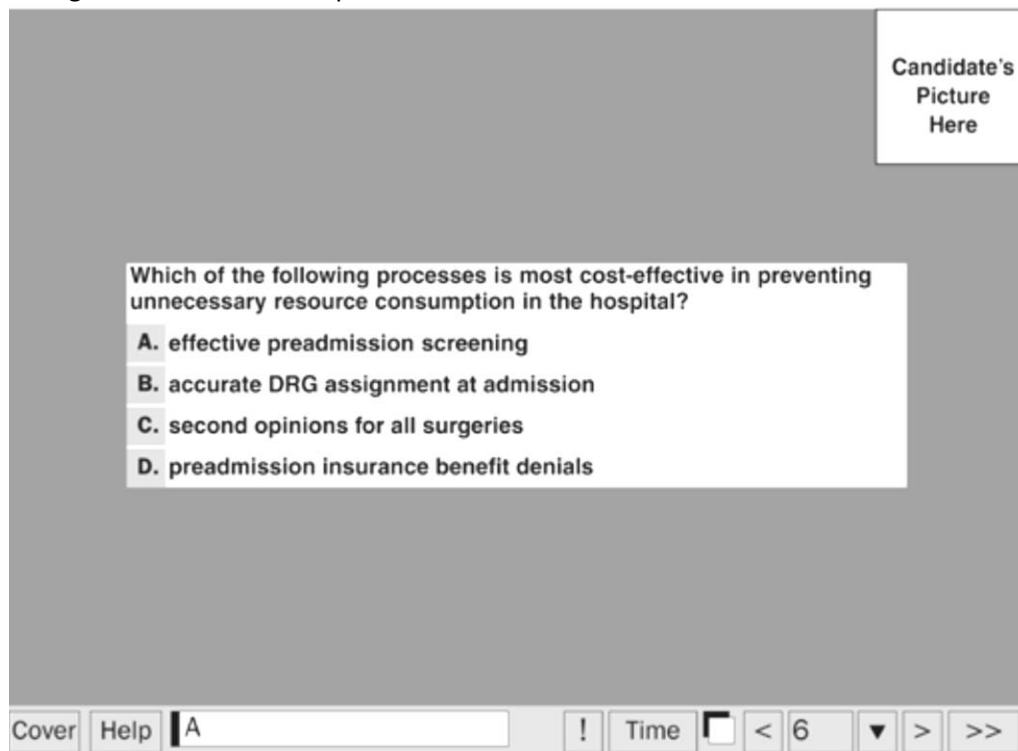
## **Practice Examination**

Prior to attempting the timed examination, you will be given the opportunity to practice taking an examination on the computer. The time used for this practice examination is NOT counted as part of the examination time or score. When you are comfortable with the computer testing process, you may quit the practice session and begin the timed examination.



## Timed Examination

Following the practice examination, the actual examination will begin. Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on-screen.



The computer monitors the time spent on the examination. You will have 3 hours to complete the examination. The examination will terminate if testing exceeds the time allowed. Click on the “Time” box in the lower right portion of the screen to monitor testing time. A digital clock indicates the time remaining to complete the examination. The time feature may be turned off during the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the lower right portion of the screen. Choices of answers to the examination questions are identified as A, B, C, or D. You must indicate your choice by either typing in the letter in the response box in the lower left portion of the computer screen or clicking on the option using the mouse. To change an answer, enter a different option by typing A, B, C, or D or by clicking on the option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish during the examination, within the time limit.

To move to the next question, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right portion of the screen. This action will move you forward through the examination question by question. To review any question, click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow key to move backward through the examination.

An examination question may be left unanswered for return later in the examination session. Questions may also be bookmarked for later review by using the mouse and clicking in the blank square to the right of the “Time” box. Click on the double arrow (>>) to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the examination. To identify all unanswered and bookmarked questions, repeatedly click on the double arrow (>>). When the examination is completed, the number of examination questions answered is reported. If not all questions have been answered and there is time remaining, return to the examination and answer those questions. Be sure to provide an answer for each examination question before ending the examination. There is no penalty for guessing.

## **Candidate Comments**

During the examination, comments may be provided for any question by clicking on the button displaying an exclamation point (!) to the left of the “Time” box. This opens a dialogue box where comments may be entered. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

## **Following the Examination**

After you finish the examination, you are asked to complete a short evaluation of your testing experience. Then, you are instructed to report to the examination proctor to complete your examination. Scores are not provided onsite. They will be mailed following the close of the examination window and made accessible at [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com) via a secure user account.

Information regarding on-line access will be sent via email at the time scores are released. This is an unofficial score report. You may not use the CPHQ credential until you receive your official documentation. The score report will indicate if you have passed or if you have not achieved the score required to pass the examination, followed by a raw score indicating the number of questions you answered correctly. Additional detail is provided in the form of raw scores by each of the four major content categories. This information is provided as feedback to help you understand your performance within the major content categories.

Your pass or fail status is determined by your overall raw score for the entire examination. Even though the examination consists of 140 questions, your score is based on 125 scored questions. Fifteen of the questions on the examination are pretest questions and are not included in the final score.

The content category scores on the score report are not used to determine pass-fail decision outcomes. They are only provided to offer a general indication regarding candidate your performance in each content category. The examination is designed to provide a consistent and precise determination of your overall performance and is not designed to provide complete information regarding your performance in each content category. You should remember that areas with a larger number of items (questions) will affect the overall score more than areas with a fewer number of items. The precision and consistency of scores diminishes with fewer items, and therefore, sub-scores should be interpreted with caution, especially those that correspond to content categories with very few items.

To ensure confidentiality, no candidate examination scores will be reported by telephone, electronic mail, or facsimile. Neither HQCC nor the testing agency will release individual score reports to employers, schools, or other individuals or organizations without your written authorization.

For information regarding failing the examination, see page 21.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Fees

Fees for the CPHQ examination are shown in the table that follows

CPHQ International Examination Fees		
All Examinations:	Online by credit card	By mail via Check*
NAHQ Member Fee (USD)	\$445	\$470
Nonmember Fee (USD)	\$515	\$540

\*Though candidates must apply for certification online, payment can be sent by via a check in the mail with the completed printed application. An additional \$25 fee must be included if payment is submitted in any way other than online. Please address any check payment to HQCC/NAHQ, 8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300 Chicago, IL 60631, USA

If you wish to join NAHQ, contact NAHQ at 800.966.9392 or visit [www.nahq.org](http://www.nahq.org).

Exam fees may be paid by credit card, personal check, or money order for the total amount, payable to HQCC/NAHQ. Please write the name of the candidate taking the exam on the face of your check. An additional \$25 charge will be added for any returned checks or rejected credit cards to cover additional handling fees and service charges imposed by the bank or Credit Card Company. Your canceled check or credit card receipt serves to document payment for the examination.

## Scores Canceled by HQCC or PSI

HQCC and PSI are responsible for the integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. HQCC and PSI are committed to rectifying such discrepancies as expeditiously as possible. Examination results may be voided if, upon investigation, violation of regulations is discovered.

## Disciplinary Policy

HQCC grants the CPHQ certification to qualified healthcare quality professionals as a means of promoting excellence and professionalism in the healthcare quality field. The Certification program is a voluntary process. The Commission, in accordance with its policies and procedures, determines whether individuals are qualified for Certification, and issues said Certification when applicable. The Commission does not determine, monitor, or otherwise become involved in the manner employers and other third parties apply the Certification.

Applications for initial Certification or renewal of the same are determined by HQCC at its sole discretion. Without limiting the foregoing, applications may be refused, candidates may be barred from future examinations, or candidates or individuals already Certified may be sanctioned, including revocation of the Certification, for, but not limited to, the following conduct (“Improper Conduct”):

- Including and/or otherwise providing false, misleading, or incomplete information on any application for Certification or renewal, or other CPHQ related document.
- Failing to complete or provide proof of completion of the any Certification or renewal requirements.
- The Commissions' determination that Certification or renewal was improperly granted.
- Cheating or assisting others to cheat on any CPHQ exam.
- Purchasing, sharing, and/or reviewing preparatory materials that have, or claim to have, actual questions, answers, or other materials from prior CPHQ exams.
- Removing or attempting to remove examination materials or information from a test site.
- Unauthorized possession or distribution of any official testing or examination materials via social media sites, text messaging, or other medium, and/or reproduced in any format.
- Causing, creating, or participating in an examination irregularity.
- Assisting others to wrongfully obtain Certification or renew their Certification.
- Failure to comply with the code of ethics in which Certification is held.
- Any conduct unbecoming of the healthcare quality profession and/or failure to comply with HQCC's policies and procedures regarding Certification.

The definitions of any and all terms (*e.g., misleading, incomplete, cheating, irregularity, unbecoming, spirit, and action, etc.*) included in the above example violations shall be determined by the Commission in its sole discretion, and are not subject to other interpretation. All CPHQs must read and agree to abide by [HQCC's Disciplinary Policies and Procedures](#) prior to sitting to the exam.

### **Pass or Fail Score Determination**

Neither HQCC nor PSI is able to release or discuss individual questions with candidates following the examination. To do so would require elimination of that question from the item bank of pretested questions and deplete the number of pretested questions required to develop future versions of the examination.

The methodology used to set the minimum passing score is the Angoff method, applied during the performance of a Passing Point Study by a panel of experts in the field.

The experts evaluated each question on the examination to determine how many correct answers are necessary to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to pass this examination portion. Your ability to pass the examination depends on the knowledge and skill you display, not on the performance of other candidates.

Passing scores may vary slightly for each version of the examination. To ensure fairness to all candidates, a process of statistical equating is used. This involves selecting an appropriate mix of individual questions for each version of the examination that meet the content distribution requirements of the examination content blueprint. Because each question has been pretested, a difficulty level can be assigned. The process then considers the difficulty level of each question selected for each version of the examination, attempting to match the difficulty level of each version as closely as possible. To ensure fairness, slight variations in difficulty level are addressed by adjusting the passing score up or down, depending on the overall difficulty level statistics for the group of scored questions that appear on a particular version of the examination.

## **If You Pass the Examination**

HQCC will e-mail a congratulatory letter and information packet to each new CPHQ that includes a certificate. Your name, as stated on the application, will appear on the certificate. HQCC will attempt to e-mail the materials to the candidate's primary e-mail address on file.

HQCC reserves the right to recognize publicly any candidate who has successfully completed a CPHQ certification examination, thereby earning the certification credential.

A physical certificate can be requested by completing the online form at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org) and paying the required \$25 fee. CPHQ pins are available for \$25 plus shipping fees and can be ordered at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org). Guaranteed delivery with package tracking may be selected for an additional \$100.

## **Continuing Education Credit**

Some organizations accept successful completion of a certification examination for continuing education (CE) credit. Check with your licensure or registration board or association for acceptance and CE credits allowed.

Refer to the "Recertification" section of this handbook (page 8) for details about CE requirements to maintain CPHQ status after passing the examination.

## **Verification of CPHQ Status**

Information on the current certification status of an individual can be obtained at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org). Employers who request verification of CPHQ status must provide the individual's name and CPHQ Certification number to ensure correct identification in the CPHQ database. Annually, a listing of successful candidates will be published on the CPHQ website at [www.cphq.org](http://www.cphq.org).

## **If You Fail the Examination**

If you do not pass the certification examination, you may reapply for the examination. You cannot test in consecutive windows. For example, if you fail the examination in the first window, you may apply for the third window of the year.

Repeat candidates must submit a new application and full examination fee. Names of candidates who do not pass the examination are confidential and are not revealed under any circumstances except by legal compulsory process.

## **Appeals**

Because the performance of each question on the examination that is included in the final score has been pretested, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions, answers, or a failing score.

Actions by the commission affecting eligibility of a candidate to take the examination may be appealed. Additionally, appeals may be considered for alleged inappropriate examination administration procedures or environmental testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process and which could have been avoided.

Appeals may be submitted by e-mail to [info@cphq.org](mailto:info@cphq.org) or in writing by mail to the attention of the HQCC chair at the address below:

HQCC Headquarters  
8735 W. Higgins Road Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60631

Equivalency eligibility appeals must be received within 30 days of the initial HQCC action. Appeals for alleged inappropriate administration procedures or severe adverse environmental testing conditions must be received within 60 days of the release of examination results.

The HQCC Chair will respond within 30 days of receipt of the appeal. If this decision is adverse, the candidate may file a second-level appeal within 30 days. A three-member panel of HQCC will review the chair's decision and respond with a final decision within 45 days of receipt.

## **Verification of Scores**

In computer-based testing, the computer accepts responses from a keyboard or mouse in digitized form. Computer-based testing eliminates problems that may have previously arisen with scanning paper-and-pencil answer sheets, because all responses are recorded by candidates during their examinations. However, verification of examination scores from electronic responses can be requested. For more information about the process and fee for this service, contact PSI at 888.519.9901 within 90 days after the examination.

## Preparation for the CPHQ Certification Examination

HQCC neither sponsors, endorses, nor financially benefits from any review courses or published preparation materials for the CPHQ certification examination. We are aware of organizations that claim to have real exam items; please be aware that it is illegal for them to possess real exam items since the items are the copyrighted property of NAHQ. If an organization or individual does have real exam items these are stolen property of NAHQ and the organization or individual can face severe civil and criminal penalties.

If a candidate is found to be utilizing materials from a company or individual claiming to have real exam items HQCC retains the right to prevent the candidate from testing, revoke their credential and bar from future testing. See pg. H for the full disciplinary policy.

Examination questions are written from a wide variety of publications and resources in the field. Some suggested preparation for the examination might include but should not be limited to the following resources:

1. Q-Solutions: Essential Resources for the Healthcare Quality Professional, 3rd ed. (NAHQ).
2. The CPHQ Practice Exam. This self-assessment can help identify areas of strength or improvement for the CPHQ examination.
3. CPHQ Review Course Online. The presentation was recorded at a live CPHQ Review Course and contains four modules that follow the content outline, including two to three practice questions with answers to help you prepare.
4. The Healthcare Quality Handbook: A Professional Resource and Study Guide. Brown, Janet, A. and Mellott, Susan (2015).
5. Facilitation at a Glance: Your Pocket Guide to Facilitation. Bens, Ingrid. (2008).
6. Preventing Medication Errors. Institute of Medicine. (2007).
7. The Six Sigma Way Team Fieldbook. Pande, Peter, Neuman, Robert, & Cavanagh, Roland. 2002.
8. Understanding Patient Safety. Wachter, Robert, 2008.
9. Improving Health Care Using Toyota Lean Production Methods. Chalice, Robert. 2007.
10. The Quality Toolbox. Tague, Nancy, 2005.
11. Lean Six Sigma Pocket Toolbook. George, Michael, Rowlans, David, Price, Mark & Maxey, John. 2005.
12. The Memory Jogger™ 2, 2nd ed. Brassard, Michael. [www.goalqpc.com](http://www.goalqpc.com)
13. A Dash Through the Data! Using Data for Improvement: An Educational DVD on the Basics of Using Data for QI. Murray, Sandra K. [www.nahq.org](http://www.nahq.org)
14. Patient Safety-Achieving a New Standard for Care: Quality Chasm Series
15. The Team Handbook, 3rd ed. 2003
16. The Lean Enterprises Memory Jogger. Richard L. Macinnes
17. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)
18. Institute for Healthcare Improvement: [www.ihq.org/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ihq.org/Pages/default.aspx)
19. Institute for Safe Medication Practices: [www.ismp.org](http://www.ismp.org)

# CPHQ EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

The content validity of the CPHQ examination is based on a practice analysis which surveyed healthcare quality professionals on the tasks they perform. Each question on the examination is linked directly to one of the tasks listed below. In other words, each question is designed to test whether the candidate possesses the knowledge necessary to perform the task or has the ability to apply it to a job situation.

Each of the tasks below was rated as significant to practice by healthcare quality professionals who responded to the survey. One rule used by the exam committee requires that a task be significant to practice in the major types and sizes of healthcare facilities, including those employed in managed care. Thus the examination content is valid for this segment of healthcare quality professionals and those employed in hospital, clinic, home care, behavioral and mental health, or other care settings.

The following is a list of tasks that forms the content outline of the CPHQ examination and to which the examination questions are linked.





## Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® Examination Specifications<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Quality Leadership and Structure (20 Items)

#### A. Leadership

1. Support organizational commitment to quality
2. Align quality and safety activities with strategic goals
3. Engage stakeholders
4. Provide consultative support to the governing body and medical staff regarding their roles and responsibilities (e.g., credentialing, privileging, quality oversight)
5. Participate in the integration of environmental safety programs within the organization (e.g., air quality, infection control practices, building, hazardous waste)
6. Assist with survey or accreditation readiness
7. Evaluate and integrate external quality innovations (e.g., resources from IHI, WHO, AHRQ, NQF)
8. Promote population health and continuum of care (e.g., handoffs, transitions of care, episode of care, utilization)

#### B. Structure

1. Assist in developing organizational measures (e.g., balanced scorecards, dashboards)
2. Assist the organization in maintaining awareness of statutory and regulatory requirements (e.g., OSHA, HIPAA, PPACA)
3. Assist in selecting and using performance improvement approaches (e.g., PDCA, Six Sigma, Lean thinking)
4. Facilitate development of the quality structure (e.g., councils and committees)
5. Communicate the impact of health information management on quality (e.g., ICD10, coding, electronic health record, meaningful use)
6. Ensure effective grievance and complaint management
7. Facilitate selection of and preparation for quality recognition programs and accreditation and certification options (e.g., Magnet, Baldrige, TJC, DNV, CARF, ISO, NCQA)
8. Communicate the financial benefits of a quality program
9. Recognize quality initiatives impacting reimbursement (e.g., capitation, pay for performance)

### 2. Information Management (25 Items)

#### A. Design and Data Collection

1. Maintain confidentiality of performance/quality improvement records and reports
2. Apply sampling methodology for data collection
3. Coordinate data collection
4. Assess customer needs/expectations (e.g., surveys, focus groups, teams)
5. Participate in development of data definitions, goals, triggers, and thresholds
6. Identify or select measures (e.g., structure, process, outcome)
7. Assist in evaluating quality management information systems
8. Identify external data sources for comparison (e.g., benchmarking)
9. Validate data integrity



## Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality<sup>®</sup> Examination Specifications<sup>1</sup>

### B. Measurement and Analysis

1. Use tools to display data or evaluate a process (e.g., fishbone, Pareto chart, run chart, scattergram, control chart)
2. Use statistics to describe data (e.g., mean, standard deviation)
3. Use statistical process controls (e.g., common and special cause variation, random variation, trend analysis)
4. Interpret data to support decision making
5. Compare data sources to establish benchmarks
6. Participate in external reporting (e.g., core measures, patient safety indicators)

## 3. Performance Measurement and Process Improvement (52 Items)

### A. Planning

1. Assist with establishing priorities
2. Facilitate development of action plans or projects
3. Participate in selection of evidence-based practice guidelines
4. Identify opportunities for participating in collaboratives
5. Identify process champions

### B. Implementation and Evaluation

1. Establish teams and roles
2. Participate in monitoring of project timelines and deliverables
3. Evaluate team effectiveness (e.g., dynamics, outcomes)
4. Participate in the process for evaluating compliance with internal and external requirements for:
  - a. clinical practice (e.g., medication use, infection prevention)
  - b. service quality
  - c. documentation
  - d. practitioner performance evaluation (i.e., peer review)
5. Perform or coordinate risk management activities (e.g., identification, analysis, prevention)

### C. Education and Training

1. Design organizational performance/quality improvement training (e.g., quality, patient safety)
2. Provide training on performance/quality improvement, program development, and evaluation concepts
3. Evaluate effectiveness of performance/quality improvement training
4. Develop/provide survey preparation training (e.g., accreditation, licensure, or equivalent)



**Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality®  
Examination Specifications<sup>1</sup>**

**D. Communication**

1. Facilitate conversations with staff regarding quality issues
2. Compile and write performance/quality improvement reports
3. Disseminate performance/quality improvement information within the organization
4. Facilitate communication with accrediting and regulatory bodies
5. Lead and facilitate change (e.g., change theories, diffusion, spread)
6. Organize meeting materials (e.g., agendas, reports, minutes)

**4. Patient Safety (28 Items)**

**A. Assessment and Planning**

1. Assess the organization's patient safety culture
2. Determine how technology can enhance the patient safety program (e.g., computerized physician order entering (CPOE), barcode medication administration (BCMA), electronic medical record (EMR), abduction/elopement security systems, human factors engineering)

**B. Implementation and Evaluation**

1. Assist with implementation of patient safety activities
2. Facilitate the ongoing evaluation of patient safety activities
3. Participate in these patient safety activities:
  - a. incident report review
  - b. sentinel/unexpected event review
  - c. root cause analysis
  - d. failure mode and effects analysis (proactive risk assessment)
  - e. patient safety goals review
  - f. identification of reportable events for accreditation and regulatory bodies
4. Integrate patient safety concepts throughout the organization
5. Educate staff regarding patient safety issues

<sup>1</sup> Approximately 26% of the items will require recall on the part of the candidate, 57% will require application of knowledge, and 17% will require analysis. Each test form will include 15 unscored pretest items in addition to the 125 scored items.



# REQUEST FOR SPECIAL EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, **please complete this form and the Documentation of Disability-Related Needs on the reverse side and submit it with your application at least 45 days prior to your requested examination date.** The information you provide and any documentation regarding your disability and your need for accommodation in testing will be treated with strict confidentiality.

## Candidate Information

Candidate ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Requested Test Center: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Last, First, Middle Initial, Former Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Telephone Number Email Address

## Special Accommodations

I request special accommodations for the \_\_\_\_\_ examination.

Please provide (check all that apply):

- Reader
- Extended testing time (time and a half)
- Reduced distraction environment
- Please specify below if other special accommodations are needed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### PLEASE READ AND SIGN:

I give my permission for my diagnosing professional to discuss with PSI staff my records and history as they relate to the requested accommodation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this form to:**  
**PSI, 18000 W. 105th St., Olathe, KS 66061-7543**  
**If you have questions, call Candidate Services at 888-519-9901.**



## DOCUMENTATION OF DISABILITY-RELATED NEEDS

Please have this section completed by an appropriate professional (education professional, physician, psychologist, psychiatrist) to ensure that PSI is able to provide the required accommodations.

<b>Professional Documentation</b>	
I have known _____ since ____ / ____ / ____ in my capacity as a	
Candidate Name	Date
_____.	
My Professional Title	
<p>The candidate discussed with me the nature of the test to be administered. It is my opinion that, because of this candidate's disability described below, he/she should be accommodated by providing the special arrangements listed on the reverse side.</p>	
Description of Disability: _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
Signed: _____ Title: _____	
Printed Name: _____	
Address: _____	
_____	
Telephone Number: _____	Email Address: _____
Date: _____	License # (if applicable): _____

**Return this form to:**  
**PSI, 18000 W. 105th St., Olathe, KS 66061-7543**  
**If you have questions, call Candidate Services at 888-519-9901.**

## REQUEST FOR DUPLICATE CPHQ EXAMINATION SCORE REPORT

**Directions:** You may use this form to ask PSI/AMP, the testing agency, to send you a duplicate copy of your score report. This request must be postmarked no later than one year after the examination administration. Proper fees and information must be included with the request. Please print or type all information in the form below. Be sure to provide all information and include the correct fee, or the request will be returned.

**Fees:** \$25 U.S. Dollars per copy. Please enclose a check or money order payable in U.S. Dollars to PSI/AMP. Do not send cash. Write your candidate identification number on the face of your payment.

**Mail to:** PSI/AMP  
CPHQ Examination  
18000 W. 105<sup>th</sup> Street  
Olathe, KS 66061-7543, USA

**Amount enclosed:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Examination Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Print your current name and address:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail  
\_\_\_\_\_

*If the above information was different at the time you tested, please write the original information below:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail  
\_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date \_\_\_\_\_ Test Site \_\_\_\_\_

**I hereby request PSI/AMP to send a duplicate copy of my score report to the first address shown above.**

Candidate's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# REQUEST TO CHANGE MAILING OR E-MAIL ADDRESS

All address and e-mail changes must be submitted in writing, either by mail or fax, including an authorization signature and candidate ID number.

You may use this form to request that HQCC enter a change of address, including e-mail address, into our database once you have registered for the examination. To protect your confidential record and ensure that no unauthorized person is able to alter your record, we require that all address changes be submitted in writing and include your authorizing signature.

HQCC will forward your address change to the testing agency PSI/AMP. If you have questions, please contact HQCC at 800.966.9392 or info@cphq.org.

Mail or fax your request to:

HQCC Headquarters  
8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60631, USA  
Fax: 847.375.6320

**Print your NEW name and address (home address is recommended):**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov . \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Work Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Print your OLD information as it appeared on your application form:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (if different from above)

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov . \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Work Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Examination Date \_\_\_\_\_ Test Site \_\_\_\_\_

**I hereby authorize HQCC and PSI/AMP to change my address in the examination database as shown above.**

Candidate's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_