



**NCMA**

**Interpretation of  
Continuing Professional Education (CPE)  
Requirements for the Certification Program  
CFCM, CCCM and CPCM**



**Table of Contents**

**INTRODUCTION .....p.3**

**APPLICABILITY OF CPE REQUIREMENTS .....p. 3**

**ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS .....p. 4**

**NCMA DESIGNATIONS & OTHER CPE REQUIREMENTS.....p. 4**

**CPE PROGRAMS & TOPIC/SUBJECT AREAS.....p. 4**  
*ACCEPTABLE PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES (p.4)*  
*ACCEPTABLE TOPICS AND SUBJECTS (p.6)*  
*UNACCEPTABLE TOPICS & SUBJECTS (p.7)*

**DETERMINING COMPLIANCE WITH CPE REQUIREMENTS.....p.7**  
*ESTABLISHING RENEWAL DATE (p.7)*  
*CPE CARRYOVER (p. 8)*  
*DEFICIENCY MAKEUP (p.8)*  
*EARLY RENEWAL (p.8)*  
*MEASURING CPE HOURS (p.8)*  
*MAINTAINING DOCUMENTATION (p.10)*  
*RETAINING RECORDS (p.10)*  
*PREPARING CPE REPORTS (p.10)*

**EXEMPTIONS AND EXCEPTIONS .....p. 10**

**RESERVATIONS & APPEALS.....p. 11**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Continuing Professional Education (CPE) has become an important topic in the contracts management community. In an environment of increasingly complexity and accelerating change, professional contracts managers recognize the need to make a strong commitment to CPE. The NCMA Certification Program is specially designed to help meet the critical need for greatly increased emphasis on the professional qualifications and stature of contracts managers. Through its three designations, the Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM), Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM), and Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM), NCMA is providing professional assistance for the future of contracts management.

Contract managers must be ready to meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. CPE for contract managers serves to maintain and enhance professional proficiency. The result is managers, who continually improve and refine their knowledge and skills in contract management topics or related technical subjects applicable to either or both the government and commercial management areas.

To retain the NCMA designations, a certificate holder must: (1) pay the required renewal fee at the time of recertification, (2) adhere to the NCMA Code of Ethics, (3) complete at least 60 hours of CPE in government or commercial contract management topics or related business subjects every five years, and (4) maintain individual records and provide detailed information on CPE hours completed.

The individual certificate holder has the responsibility to comply with the NCMA CPE requirements. Carrying out this responsibility requires exercising sound professional judgment. Individual designees are responsible for (1) seeking opportunities for CPE, (2) successfully completing CPE programs and activities, (3) maintaining documentation of the CPE hours completed for reporting to the board if requested, and (4) monitoring their own progress toward meeting the CPE requirements. To assist individual certificate holders in exercising that judgment, this interpretation has been issued.

The CPE requirements are based on the premise that all NCMA's designees will maintain and enhance their professional proficiency in contract management. Designees have wide latitude in selecting suitable CPE.

## **APPLICABILITY OF CPE REQUIREMENTS**

The CPE requirements stated under the NCMA program apply to all active certificate holders who work in the public or private sector. The CPE requirements set forth 60 hours as the minimum number of hours of CPE that NCMA's designees must complete every five years to maintain their certifications. If a designee has earned a dual certification, then the renewal cycle begins with the conferring of the last designation earned. One renewal period will serve for all designations earned through NCMA. For example, if a designee earns the CFCM in April of

2002, the renewal cycle begins at that point and continues for five years, ending December 31, 2007. If, however, the designee earns the CCCM in June of 2003, the renewal cycle begins at that point, and both designations will be renewed by the end of the fifth year, or 12/31/08.

## **ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **CPE PROGRAMS & TOPIC/SUBJECT AREAS**

The following paragraphs address the programs, activities, topics, and subjects that would and would not satisfy NCMA's CPE requirements.

CPE programs are structured educational activities designed to maintain or enhance the designee's professional proficiency in contracts management. This may be achieved through interaction with an instructor and other participants (a group program) or without major interaction with an instructor (an individual or self-study program).

### ***ACCEPTABLE PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES***

The NCMA does not establish detailed criteria for CPE programs. However, it does require that CPE contribute to the designated contract manager's professional proficiency and professional growth. To determine if programs contribute to professional proficiency and to facilitate documentation, the following criteria for CPE programs may be considered as appropriate.

#### **a. For both group and individual/self-study programs**

1. An agenda or outline is prepared in advance and retained by the program sponsor that indicates the name(s) of the instructor(s); the subject(s)/topic(s) covered; the date(s) and length of the program; and, when appropriate, the program's learning objectives and any prerequisites.
2. The program is developed by individuals qualified or experienced in the topic/subject matter.
3. Program materials are technically accurate, current, and sufficient to meet the program's learning objectives.
4. The program is reviewed, when appropriate, by other qualified or experienced individuals. The nature and extent of any review may vary depending on characteristics of the program.
5. Evaluations of the program are obtained from instructors and participants, when appropriate.

The following programs and activities qualify for CPE hours provided they are in acceptable topics and subjects as discussed above:

**a. Group programs**

(where attendance records are maintained and where the program is presented by a qualified instructor or discussion leader)

1. Internal training programs (courses, seminars, and workshops).
2. The portion of a contract management organization staff meeting in which a structured educational program is used to provide staff with knowledge regarding topics and subjects such as those included below. Informal discussions of current events in the contract management profession do not qualify for CPE hours.
3. University and college courses (credit and noncredit).
4. Education and development programs presented at conferences, conventions, meetings, seminars, and workshops of professional organizations. For example, the NCMA World Congress, East Coast Conference, Commercial Conference, and education programs presented at monthly chapter meetings.
5. Training programs presented by other contract management organizations, educational organizations, foundations, and associations. For example, education and training programs sponsored by NCMA, NCMA's individual chapters, ISM, NIGP, etc.

**b. Individual study programs**

(where participants are required to register for the program and the program sponsor provides evidence, such as a certificate or other document, of satisfactory completion).

1. Correspondence courses, self-study guides, and workbooks.
2. Courses given through audio cassette tapes, videotapes, and computers.
3. On-line CPE sponsored by NCMA or other allied organizations.

**c. Other professional activities**

(subject to the limitations discussed later under **Determining Compliance**)

1. Serving as a speaker, instructor, or discussion leader at group programs, such as NCMA conferences, that qualify for CPE hours.
2. Publishing articles and books or developing CPE courses on topics and subjects that qualify for CPE hours and that contribute directly to the author's professional proficiency. For example, writing an article published in *CM* magazine.

***ACCEPTABLE TOPICS AND SUBJECTS***

The NCMA designee is initially responsible for determining whether a topic or subject qualifies as acceptable CPE. For instance, there are CPE programs that include a wide variety of topics and subjects that may contribute to maintaining or enhancing the professional proficiency of some designees, but not others. Determining what topics and subjects are appropriate for individuals to satisfy the CPE requirement is a matter of professional judgment. Among the considerations in exercising that judgment are the individual's experience, the contract management area(s) in which they work, and the responsibilities they assume in performing contract management functions.

CPE that would satisfy the NCMA Certification Program's requirement should be in topics or related business subjects applicable to contract management areas. Examples of such topics and subjects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- accounting
- accounting principles and standards
- analytical procedures
- assessment of management controls
- audit of contract compliance/costs
- best practices in contracts management
- budgeting
- business law
- business
- compliance with laws and regulations
- computer science
- computer security
- contract auditing
- contract law
- contract management
- contract planning or analysis
- contract related fraud
- contract auditing
- contract management
- contract management systems
- contract planning or analysis
- contract types
- contract-related fraud
- cost accounting
- data analysis
- disputes resolution
- economics
- electronic data processing
- evaluation design
- finance
- financial reporting
- forecasts and projections
- industrial engineering
- information resources management
- information technology
- intellectual property
- interviewing techniques
- investigations
- legal issues
- market research
- marketing
- mathematics
- negotiation
- operations research
- oral and written communications
- patents
- performance or operations
- performance measurement and reporting
- principles of management & supervision
- probability
- process reengineering
- procurement
- productivity
- program evaluation
- proposal/solicitation development
- public policy and structure
- purchasing
- quality assurance/control
- quantitative methods
- report writing
- risk assessment
- statistics
- social sciences
- strategic planning
- supply chain management
- termination of contracts

Except as discussed previously, instruction in topics and subjects that meet the CPE requirements of other professional organizations (the ISM or the NIGP, for example) would satisfy the CPE requirement, providing that the CPE maintains or enhances professional proficiency in contract management.

### ***UNACCEPTABLE TOPICS & SUBJECTS***

Examples of programs and activities or topics and subjects that do not qualify for CPE hours include, but are not limited to, the following

1. Informal on-the-job training;
2. Basic or elementary courses in topics and subjects in which the NCMA designee already has the necessary knowledge and skills and that served as the initial basis for qualification as an NCMA designee;
3. Programs that are not designed to maintain or enhance contract managers' professional proficiency, but are designed for the general public, such as resume writing, improving parent-child relations, personal investments, money management, and retirement planning;
4. Sales-oriented programs that demonstrate office equipment;
5. Programs restricted to an organization's administrative operations, such as how to prepare time and attendance reports or internal administrative reporting responsibilities;
6. Business sessions at professional organization conferences, conventions, and meetings;
7. Participation as a member of a committee of a professional organization; and
8. Preparation and presentation time for repeated presentations within the renewal cycle.

### **DETERMINING COMPLIANCE WITH CPE REQUIREMENTS**

To maintain certification, NCMA's program requires that certificate holders apply for certificate renewal and complete at least 60 hours of CPE in contract management topics or related technical subjects every five years. See later answers for issues related to determining compliance with those requirements.

### ***ESTABLISHING RENEWAL DATE***

Certificate holders must pay the applicable recertification fee upon renewal and must complete at least 60 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) every five years. Designees need to submit supporting documentation of the CPE hours at the time of renewal.

The first CPE cycle ends on December 31<sup>st</sup> of the fifth year following the one in which the designation was earned. For example, if the CFCM was earned anytime in 2000, the first CPE renewal cycle ends on December 31, 2005.

During the final 18 months of the renewal cycle, at least 10 hours of CPE must be completed. By the end of the renewal cycle, a total of 60 hours of CPE must have been completed.

### ***CPE CARRYOVER***

Designees may not carry over CPE hours earned in excess of the 60-hour requirement from one period to the next five-year period. The 60-hour requirement is the minimum number of hours of CPE that designated contracts managers should complete every five years.

### ***DEFICIENCY MAKEUP***

Designees who have not completed the required number of CPE hours for any renewal cycle will have the three months (January 1 - March 31) immediately following the end of the renewal cycle to make up the deficiency. Any CPE hours completed toward a deficiency in one cycle should be documented in the CPE records and may not be counted toward the requirements for the next.

### ***EARLY RENEWAL***

Even if a designee has earned his or her required CPE hours a year prior to the end of the renewal cycle, he or she may not renew early. Renewals will be accepted only during the year in which they are due.

### ***MEASURING CPE HOURS***

A CPE hour may be granted for each 50 minutes of participation in programs and activities that qualify. At conferences and conventions, where individual presentations are less than and/or more than 50 minutes, the sum of the presentations should be considered as one total program. For example, two 90-minute, two 50-minute, and three 40-minute presentations equal 400 minutes, or eight CPE hours.

Sponsors of CPE programs should monitor their programs to accurately assign the appropriate number of hours. NCMA designees should earn CPE hours only for the actual time they attend the program. Preparation time for students participating in a CPE program is not counted.

Designees completing or teaching university or college noncredit courses should receive CPE hours based on the guidance provided above. For designees completing university or college credit courses, each semester hour credit equals 15 CPE hours, and each quarter hour credit equals 10 CPE hours. Instructors for university or college credit courses should receive CPE hours based on the number of credit hours the university/college gives a student for successfully completing the course (a three-semester hour credit course x 15 CPE hours per semester hour = 45 CPE hours).

An instructor should not receive CPE hours for teaching a course more than once within the renewal cycle, unless the course was changed significantly. The maximum number of CPE hours that may be granted to an individual as an instructor should not exceed 30 hours for any renewal cycle.

Participants in correspondence or individual study programs should be granted CPE hours when they satisfactorily complete the program. These programs generally should be pre-tested by the vendor or sponsor to determine the average completion time, and CPE hours should be granted in an amount equal to the average completion time.

For example, a correspondence course that takes an average of 600 minutes to complete should be granted 10 CPE hours. However, if the program has not been pre-tested, participants may still be granted CPE hours in an amount equal to one-half of the time they actually spent on the program.

For example, a designee who takes 800 minutes to complete an individual study program may be granted 8 CPE hours ( $800 \text{ minutes} \times \frac{1}{2} = 400 \text{ minutes}$  divided by 50 minutes = 8 CPE hours).

Speakers, instructors (university/college noncredit courses) and discussion leaders at programs that qualify for CPE should receive CPE hours for preparation and presentation time to the extent the topic or subject matter contributes directly to their professional proficiency. One hour of CPE should be granted for each 50 minutes of presentation time, and up to two additional hours of CPE may be granted for advance preparation for each 50 minutes of their presentation.

For example, a discussion leader could receive up to 21 hours of CPE for a presentation of 350 minutes (seven hours for presentation and 14 hours for preparation). An individual should not receive CPE hours for either preparation or presentation time for repeated presentations that he or she makes within a renewal cycle, unless the topic or subject matter involved was changed significantly. The maximum number of CPE hours that may be granted to an individual as a speaker, instructor, or discussion leader should not exceed 40 hours for any renewal cycle.

Articles, books, or CPE courses written by designees on topics and subjects related to their expertise and/or work that contribute directly to professional proficiency will qualify for CPE hours in the year they are published. One hour of CPE should be granted for each hour devoted to writing articles, books, or course materials that are published. However, CPE hours for published writings should not exceed 20 hours for any renewal cycle.

### ***MAINTAINING DOCUMENTATION***

The designee is responsible for maintaining documentation of the CPE hours completed.

Records should include the following information for each CPE program or activity attended or completed:

1. sponsoring organization (NCMA or local chapter);
2. location at which the program was given
3. title of the program and a brief description of its contents;

4. dates attended for group programs or dates completed for individual study programs (July 2-6, 2001);
5. number of CPE hours earned (27), and evidence of attendance or completion. This might include the following:
  - a. record of the grade received for a university or college credit course;
  - b. outline and evidence of attendance or of having been the instructor or discussion leader from the program sponsor;
  - c. certificate or other evidence of completion from the program sponsor; or
  - d. copy of the published book, article, or course.

A copy of a current certificate indicating compliance with the DAWIA requirement for 80 hours of CPE every two years will suffice as evidence of having earned the required number of hours.

### ***RETAINING RECORDS***

All CPE records should be maintained for a minimum of six years. Those six years encompass the five-year renewal cycle plus an extra year in case there is a question concerning documentation.

### ***PREPARING CPE REPORTS***

Designees are required to maintain records of CPE hours earned and provide supporting documentation on CPE hours completed.

### ***EXEMPTIONS AND EXCEPTIONS***

If a certificant is 60 years of age and has an NCMA designation in good standing (or is 55 no longer employed in the profession), then lifetime certification may be earned. Once awarded the Lifetime Certification, the certificant is no longer required to meet the five-year recertification requirement or CPE requirements. Certificants must earn and provide documentation of a pro-rated number of acceptable CPE hours at the time he/she applies for Lifetime status. For example: A certificant who last recertified on December 31, 2002 and who turned age 60 on January 1, 2006 would be required to submit documentation of at least 36 hours (12 hours per year x 3 years) of acceptable CPE at the time he/she applies for Lifetime status.

If a retired designee returns to active service, he or she must notify NCMA's Certification Department and comply with CPE requirements then in effect.

The Contract Management Certification & Accreditation Board (CMCAB) may grant exceptions from the CPE requirements for a valid reason such as foreign residency, ill health, family leave, or military service. The certificate holder should fully describe the reasons for requesting an exception and submit it to the Certification Department for a determination by the CMCAB. The

Certification Department will notify the designee of the board's decision and retain that documentation for an appropriate period of time.

### **RESERVATIONS & APPEALS**

The CMCAB can waive any and all requirements on a case-by-case basis depending upon the extenuating circumstances that may be presented to the Board. In any such case, the CMCAB decision shall be final.