ENTRY LEVEL CERTIFICATION*

HANDBOOK

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2021
(Published October 12, 2020)

*As of this publishing date, NCMA’s new entry level certification has not been titled.
Handbook for the Entry Level Certification*

Effective January 1, 2021

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Welcome to the Entry Level Certification

The National Contract Management Association (NCMA) is pleased to welcome you to our certification process. Obtaining and maintaining the entry level certification is a significant milestone in your professional development. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with important information about the policies and procedures on how you can:

- Apply for the entry level certification,
- Obtain the entry level certification, and
- Maintain the entry level certification.

NCMA requires that all entry level certification applicants read this entire handbook.

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**NCMA Contact Information**

For general information on the certification program:

Visit [https://www.ncmahq.org/certification](https://www.ncmahq.org/certification)

Call 800.344.8096 or 571.382.0082

Email Certification@ncmahq.org

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Entry Level Certification Handbook was created October 12, 2020

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**About NCMA’s Certification Program**

**Program Scope**

NCMA was founded in 1959 and has become the prevailing professional resource for those in the contract management profession. NCMA is dedicated to the professional growth and educational advancement of all contract managers. In addition, NCMA strives to serve and inform the profession it represents and to offer opportunities for the open exchange of ideas in neutral forums.

In this role, NCMA is the foremost certification body for contract management. NCMA certifications are based on an **American National Standard (ANS)**, the **Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)**, and the **Uniform Commercial Code (UCC)**.

NCMA’s certification program is maintained by the Certification Oversight Body, which operates as an impartial body with membership drawn from a variety of backgrounds—to include government and commercial buyers, sellers, academicians, regulatory authorities, and consultants. Collectively, this interdisciplinary group maintains the certification program with the intent to advance contract management practices and competencies. Essentially, NCMA certifications are developed and maintained by Contract Management practitioners for Contract Management practitioners.

NCMA’s certification program includes:

- Certified Professional Contract Manager® (CPCM®),
- Certified Federal Contract Manager® (CFCM®), and
- Certified Commercial Contract Manager® (CCCM®), and an entry level certification (title to be determined).

NCMA certifications are distinguished by their development and universal application, which makes them transferable across industries. A significant strength of NCMA certifications is that they are portable and not tied to any single role, contract methodology, or organization.

**Program Vision**

The NCMA certification program advances contract management practices and competence. It serves as the profession’s standard for the practice of contract management. NCMA certifications attest to the combined knowledge, skills, and abilities of government and commercial buyers and sellers, as well as academics, regulatory authorities, and consultants. NCMA certifications are intended to be earned by those who manage contracts and who meet the knowledge requirements expected to be acquired through relevant education, training, and experience. Following is an image of the NCMA Certification Pyramid.
Definitions

“Contract management” means the actions of a contract manager to develop solicitations, develop offers, form contracts, perform contracts, and close contracts. (Source: ANSI/NCMA ASD 1-2019.)

“Contract manager” means the authorized representative or agent for a contracting party. (Source: ANSI/NCMA ASD 1-2019.)

“Applicant” means a person who has submitted a certification application, but the application has not yet been approved.

“Candidate” means a person who has an approved certification application but is not yet certified.

“Certificant” means a person holding a certification in good standing.

“Retired certification status” means a recognition bestowed on eligible certificants who no longer practice in contract management or related fields. It is not an active certification status.

Basic Tenets

NCMA will ensure that:

a) Only those individuals who demonstrate the knowledge/skills to be competent are certified.

b) Any instruments used to measure the candidates are fair, objective, valid, and reliable.

c) Certification functions are separated from all other functions NCMA performs (e.g., membership, education, etc.).

d) All certificants agree to abide by the NCMA Code of Ethics.

e) The confidentiality of all candidate data is maintained.

f) Fairness is demonstrated through impartiality to all certification applicants and candidates.

g) All certifications will expire unless the recertification requirements are met.

Overview of the Entry Level Certification

The entry level certification is awarded to those who meet education, training, and experience requirements and who demonstrate knowledge of the Contract Management Standard™ (CMS™). It is intended to serve as a steppingstone to higher level NCMA certifications.

The CMS™ is an American National Standard (ANS) accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANS number: ANSI/NCMA ASD 1-2019). The CMS™ defines key contract management concepts and processes and serves as the foundation and framework for the Contract Management Body of Knowledge®.

Who Should Pursue the Entry Level Certification?

• Anyone with a 4-year degree from a regionally accredited college with less than one year of experience in contract management,

• Buyers and sellers with at least one year of contract management experience without a regionally accredited 4-year degree,

• Buyers interested in understanding how their actions impact sellers and sellers interested in understanding how their actions impact buyers, and

• Anyone interested in understanding the foundational aspects of the contract life cycle.
NCMA Certificant Expectations

NCMA expects its certificants to behave in a professional manner while continuously striving to improve the individual competence of themselves and those around them, and to improve organizational capability. To reinforce this expectation, all applicants, candidates, certificants, and those who are in the Retired certification status must agree to and abide by the NCMA Code of Ethics and the NCMA Certification Policies & Procedures Agreement.

- **NCMA Code of Ethics.** The Code establishes principles for members of the contract management profession. The Code requires members of the contract management profession to conduct themselves in a way that brings credit to the profession.
  - Please visit the online Code of Ethics to read the Code.

- **NCMA Certification Policies & Procedures Agreement.** The Agreement establishes policies and procedures for those seeking and achieving NCMA certifications. The Agreement requires all applicants, candidates, certificants, and those who are in the Retired certification status to conduct themselves in a way that bolsters the integrity of the NCMA certification program.
  - Please visit the online Certification Policies & Procedures Agreement to read the Agreement.

The Code and the Agreement may be updated or revised from time to time. It is your responsibility to obtain, understand, and agree to the current online versions.
Steps in the Entry Level Certification Process

The following figure presents the step-by-step process to apply for, obtain, and maintain the entry level certification. Each of the steps are discussed in detail on the following pages.

1. Application & Fee Submission
   You login to complete & submit

2. Application Review
   NCMA takes up to 15 days to review; approvals good up to 1 year or up to 3 entry level certification exams, if needed

3. Schedule Your Exam & Pay Exam Fee
   You schedule a date/time convenient for you; exam fee is paid each time the exam is taken

4. Take the Exam
   Show up prepared for a 2-hour exam with 80 multiple-choice questions (didn’t pass on 1st 2 tries, go to step 3; didn’t pass on 3rd try, go to step 1)

5. Certification
   Congratulations!
   Your certificate and letter will be mailed out at the beginning of the month following certification

6. Recertification
   Every 3 years submit application and fee

7. Retired Certification Status
   For those no longer active in Contract Management

8. Credential Suspension
   Occurs Jan 1 - Mar 31 after 3 full years of certification; late fee must be paid; you may not claim to hold the entry level certification

9. Credential Expiration
   Occurs Apr 1 after 3 full years of certification; you may not claim to hold the entry level certification; to be certified again, go to step 1
Step 1. Application & Fee Submission

To be eligible for the entry level certification, you must meet certain education, training, and work experience requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Work Experience</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year (must conform with Contract Management Standard competencies)</td>
<td>40 CPE (must conform with CPE Guide™)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For degrees outside the United States, evidence of equivalency must be provided by an independent third-party evaluator.

Entry Level Certification Fees

Though you are not required to be an NCMA member to obtain an NCMA certification, the fees you pay are determined by your NCMA membership status. The membership rates apply only when you are a member in good standing. The following figure presents the applicable fees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Member Fee</th>
<th>Nonmember Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification Application</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(good for 1 year but no more than 3 exams)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Exam</td>
<td>$125 (US &amp; Canada)</td>
<td>$125 (US &amp; Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(must pay for each exam individually)</td>
<td>$150 (all others)</td>
<td>$150 (all others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recertification Application</td>
<td>$95</td>
<td>$145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(submitted every 3 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to Submit Payment

For online application submissions, once you have uploaded your certification or recertification application, payment will be made by credit card through the NCMA shopping cart process.

For manual application submissions, include your credit card information on the application, or submit a check or money order payable to “NCMA” with the mailed package.

Exam fees are submitted directly to the testing center when you schedule your exam.
Special Needs Accommodations
You may request special needs accommodations for any NCMA exam due to disability, handicap, and/or other conditions that may impair your ability to take the exam.

Please identify your special need for exam accommodations as part of the application process.

If you do not request exam accommodations at the time of application but will require them, please contact certification@ncmahq.org as soon as possible. If you have already scheduled your exam, you may need to cancel and reschedule the appointment.

Step 2. Application Review
Once your application and fee have been successfully submitted, you will receive an email notification within fifteen (15) business days if your application is approved or if additional information or evidence is required.

Exam Eligibility Period
Once your application has been approved, the one-year exam eligibility period begins. NCMA will send you an email notification with instructions on how to schedule your exam date and time.

You may take the exam up to three (3) times within this eligibility period if you do not pass the exam on the first or second attempts. Though there are no additional application fees to take the exam the second or third time, there will be an additional exam fee for each exam taken.

Step 3. Schedule Your Exam & Pay Exam Fee
All NCMA certification exams are administered through Kryterion Testing Centers and it is the responsibility of the candidate to schedule the exam. NCMA cannot reserve or guarantee seating at the testing centers. We recommend that you schedule your exam as soon as you determine the date on which you want to take it and at least three (3) months before the expiration of your eligibility period.

Please save all exam scheduling verifications and correspondence received for your records.

Testing Center Exam Instructions
Taking an exam at a testing center can be a new, exciting, yet anxious experience. We want you to feel relaxed and comfortable when visiting a Kryterion Testing Center, so we’ve provided the following overview on what to expect as you move through the process:

1. Registration & Payment
You will register for your exam through NCMA’s Webassessor portal (access is provided in the application approval email mentioned in Step 2). During this process you will select your desired exam, choose Onsite delivery, and select a Testing Center, date, and time for your exam session. You will also be asked to pay the exam fee at this time.
2. Confirmation
You will receive an email confirming your scheduled testing date, time, Kryterion Testing Center location, and your Test Taker Authorization Code. This code is required to launch your exam at the Testing Center.

3. Check-In at the Testing Center
Arrive 15 minutes prior to your scheduled exam time. Two forms of identification are required at the Testing Center, and they will be verified and recorded. The name on your two forms of identification must match exactly with your name as specified in your test-taker profile in Webassessor. Additionally, all identification must be current. Expired identification will not be accepted. You will also need to provide the Test Taker Authorization Code from your Confirmation email. The Kryterion Certified Proctor (KCP) will provide you with documentation about preparing for your exam session while your workstation is prepared in the testing room.

4. Personal Items
DO NOT bring personal items with you to the testing center. NCMA, Kryterion, Inc., and Kryterion Testing Center locations are not responsible for lost or stolen items. You will be asked to place any personal items in a cabinet, locker, or compartment prior to entering the exam area. Personal items include but are not limited to bags, purses, keys, wallets, hats, briefcases, books, cell phones, calculators, portable electronic devices, watches, and any weapons or firearms.

5. Taking Your Exam
Once your exam has loaded, the proctor will escort you to the workstation in the testing room and you may then begin your exam. The test engine provides you with detailed instructions on how to take the exam and walks you through each step of the process.

6. Submitting Your Exam
At the end of your exam session, you will be prompted to notify the proctor that you have completed the exam. The KCP will submit your exam and complete the check-out process.

7. Exam Results
Exam results are provided immediately on-screen after submission (results will not be printed by the Testing Center). However, any score provided at the conclusion of a candidate’s exam session is considered preliminary until the candidate receives notice from NCMA that the result is official.

How to Reschedule or Cancel Your Exam Appointment
You may reschedule or cancel your testing-center registration without incurring an additional fee with advance notice of at least 72 hours before the scheduled start time of your exam. Please Note: 72 hours is not three business days; it is 72 hours prior to the scheduled exam start time.

Reschedules and cancellations more than 72 hours before your exam start time can typically be completed free of charge through your NCMA account in Webassessor. If you reschedule or cancel within 72 hours of your scheduled exam start time, you may be charged an additional fee.

How to Reschedule Your Assessment:
1. Log in to your account in Webassessor.
2. Click on the My Assessments tab and locate the Scheduled Assessments section and click on the Reschedule/Cancel link to the right of your scheduled assessment. From this exam details page, the Reschedule and Cancel buttons will be available.
3. **To reschedule your assessment**, select the Reschedule/Cancel link and follow the prompts.
   - If you are within the reschedule window, you will be prompted to pay the reschedule fee. Submit your payment details in order to complete the reschedule process. An email will be sent confirming the payment and rescheduling of your assessment.
   - Click Done on the purchase-confirmation page to return to your account home screen.

**How to Cancel Your Assessment:**

1. Log in to your account in Webassessor.
2. Click on the **My Assessments** tab and locate the Scheduled Assessments section and click on the Reschedule/Cancel link to the right of your scheduled assessment. From this assessment details page, the Reschedule and Cancel buttons will be available.
3. If you cancel an upcoming assessment at a testing center outside of the 72-hour window, you will receive a refund for any fees you paid for the assessment. If you cancel an upcoming assessment within the 72-hour window, you will receive a partial refund (the assessment fee less the late-cancellation fee).
4. If you cancel an upcoming online proctored assessment outside of the 24-hour window, you will receive a refund for any fees you paid for the assessment. If you cancel an upcoming assessment within the 24-hour window, you will receive a partial refund (the assessment fee less the late-cancellation fee).
5. **To cancel your assessment**, select the Cancel option.
   - If you are within the cancellation window, you will see your total eligible refund amount on the following screen.
   - If you submit the cancellation request, your assessment will be cancelled, and you will be issued a refund to the original credit card used to complete the transaction. You will then be redirected to your account home screen. This refund may take 8-10 days to fully process.
     - An email will be sent confirming the cancellation of your assessment and the amount refunded.

**No-Show Status**

Failure to notify Kryterion or NCMA within the specified time periods to reschedule or cancel your exam and failure to meet a scheduled exam appointment will result in a no-show status. With a no-show status, you will forfeit the exam fee and you must pay the full exam fee to schedule another exam appointment.
Step 4. Take the Exam

NCMA Exam Confidentiality Agreement

Prior to beginning the exam, all candidates are presented with the following Exam Confidentiality Agreement (ECA):

As a candidate for this exam, you are required to follow the terms of the NCMA Exam Confidentiality Agreement (ECA) and the NCMA Code of Ethics. Please read and agree to the following before beginning your exam:

1. I will follow all NCMA certification program policies and requirements. I understand that failure to do so may result in investigation and sanctions by NCMA, which could include canceling my exam results and forbidding me from taking future exams.
2. I understand that NCMA exams are confidential. I will not discuss or disclose the questions, content, or answers from my exam to any person or organization, including other candidates, education providers, or exam preparation services, etc. at any time.
3. Prior to this exam, I have not received information from any source regarding the confidential questions, content, or answers of this exam.
4. I will promptly report to NCMA any possible violations of the ECA, NCMA Code of Ethics, or NCMA certification program policies by myself or others.

The ECA is a reminder of some, but not all, of the security related policies that the candidate previously accepted during their application. Failure to agree with any or all of the ECA will result in the immediate termination of the candidate’s exam session.

Entry Level Certification Exam

The entry level certification exam is based on the competencies found in the CMS™. The exam is comprised of 80 multiple-choice questions, with each question having four (4) options. Candidates are allowed up to two (2) hours to complete the exam.

Candidates who do not receive a passing score must wait at least thirty (30) days before retaking the exam. If the exam is not passed on the second attempt, candidates must wait at least sixty (60) days before retaking the exam. If the exam is not passed on the third attempt candidates must wait at least ninety (90) days, AND a new application and fee must be submitted.

Entry Level Certification Exam Information

The entry level certification exam is comprised of 80 multiple-choice questions. The following formula is used to determine the 2-hour length of the exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Minutes per Question</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Total Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entry Level Certification Job Task Analysis (JTA)

NCMA conducts a JTA to determine what job tasks are important and used frequently by contract managers. NCMA’s JTA process includes a public survey, review by subject matter experts, and public comments. This structured approach identifies the skills, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics needed to effectively perform contract management.

The NCMA JTA led to the identification of contract management competencies. A competency is the blend of related skills, knowledge, abilities, and other work-related characteristics that:

- Affects a major part of one’s job (a role or responsibility);
- Correlates with job performance;
- Can be measured against well-accepted standards;
- Can be improved through education, training, and work experience; and
- Differentiates individuals and organizations from the competition.

Item Development

The exam questions for the entry level certification are:

- Developed and independently validated by working groups,
- Referenced to the CMS™, and
- Monitored through psychometric analysis.

Entry Level Certification Exam Blueprint

The exam blueprint details the range of questions contained in each CMS™ section. The following table presents the number of possible questions in each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th># Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Guiding Principles</td>
<td>15 – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Pre-Award</td>
<td>15 – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Award</td>
<td>15 – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Post-Award</td>
<td>15 – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Entry Level Certification Exam Content Matrix

The following table presents a matrix that aligns CMS™ competencies with the entry level certification exam knowledge content areas. The knowledge content areas describe the type of knowledge necessary to achieve contract management competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMS™ Competencies</th>
<th>Entry Level Certification Exam Knowledge Content Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.0 Guiding Principles</strong></td>
<td><strong>K1.0 Guiding Principles Knowledge Content Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Skills and Roles</td>
<td>K1.1 Definition of and the value added by Skills and Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Contract Principles</td>
<td>K1.2 Definition of and the value added by Contract Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Standards of Conduct</td>
<td>K1.3 Definition of and the value added by Standards of Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Regulatory Compliance</td>
<td>K1.4 Definition of and the value added by Regulatory Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Situational Assessment</td>
<td>K1.5 Definition of and the value added by Situational Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Team Dynamics</td>
<td>K1.6 Definition of and the value added by Team Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Communication and Documentation</td>
<td>K1.7 Definition of and the value added by Communication and Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.0 Pre-Award</strong></td>
<td><strong>K2.0 Pre-Award Knowledge Content Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain A: 2.1 Develop Solicitation</strong></td>
<td>K2.1.1.1 Shape Internal Customer Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Plan Solicitation</td>
<td>K2.1.1.2 Conduct Market Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Request Offers</td>
<td>K2.1.1.3 Perform Risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain B: 2.2 Develop Proposal</strong></td>
<td>K2.1.1.4 Formulate Contracting Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Plan Sales</td>
<td>K2.1.1.5 Finalize Solicitation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Prepare Offer</td>
<td>K2.1.2.1 Execute Solicitation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain A: 2.1 Develop Solicitation</strong></td>
<td>K2.1.2.2 Prepare Solicitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Plan Solicitation</td>
<td>K2.1.2.3 Issue Solicitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Request Offers</td>
<td>K2.1.2.4 Amend Solicitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain B: 2.2 Develop Proposal</strong></td>
<td>K2.2.1.1 Conduct Pre-Sales Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Plan Sales</td>
<td>K2.2.1.2 Evaluate Solicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Prepare Offer</td>
<td>K2.2.1.3 Conduct Offer/No-Offer Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain A: 2.1 Develop Solicitation</strong></td>
<td>K2.2.1.4 Finalize Sales Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Plan Solicitation</td>
<td>K2.2.2.1 Execute Sales Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Request Offers</td>
<td>K2.2.2.2 Develop Execution Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain B: 2.2 Develop Proposal</strong></td>
<td>K2.2.2.3 Develop Risk Mitigation Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Plan Sales</td>
<td>K2.2.2.4 Assess Teaming Options and Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Prepare Offer</td>
<td>K2.2.2.5 Participate in Pre-Offer Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain A: 2.1 Develop Solicitation</strong></td>
<td>K2.2.2.6 Finalize Offer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.0 Award

**Domain C: 3.1 Form Contract**
- 3.1.1 Cost or Price Analysis
- 3.1.2 Plan Negotiations
- 3.1.3 Select Source
- 3.1.4 Manage Disagreements

**K3.0 Award Knowledge Content Area**
- K3.1.1.1 Comprehend Offer
- K3.1.1.2 Evaluate Seller Terms & Their Impact on Risk
- K3.1.1.3 Determine Reasonable Pricing
- K3.1.1.4 Document Analysis Results
- K3.1.2.1 Clarification Requests
- K3.1.2.2 Document Negotiation Objectives
- K3.1.2.3 Conduct Discussions
- K3.1.3.1 Review Compliance of Offer(s)
- K3.1.3.2 Source Selection
- K3.1.3.3 Conduct Negotiations
- K3.1.3.4 Finalize Negotiations
- K3.1.3.5 Final Offer Revision
- K3.1.3.6 Prepare Contract Document
- K3.1.3.7 Finalize Contract Award
- K3.1.3.8 Document Outcome of Offer
- K3.1.4.1 Submit Protests and Appeals
- K3.1.4.2 Respond to Protests and Appeals

### 4.0 Post-Award

**Domain D: 4.1 Perform Contract**
- 4.1.1 Administer Contract
- 4.1.2 Ensure Quality
- 4.1.3 Manage Subcontracts
- 4.1.4 Manage Changes

**Domain E: 4.2 Close Contract**
- 4.2.1 Close Out Contract

**K4.0 Post-Award Knowledge Content Area**
- K4.1.1.1 Execute Contract
- K4.1.1.2 Conduct Post-Award Conference Meeting
- K4.1.1.3 Maintain Contract Documentation/Files
- K4.1.1.4 Provide Cost Information
- K4.1.1.5 Establish/Maintain Communications
- K4.1.1.6 Evaluate Interim Contract Performance
- K4.1.1.7 Manage Deliverables
- K4.1.2.1 Plan for Contract Performance Delivery
- K4.1.2.2 Plan for Contract Performance Monitoring
- K4.1.2.3 Inspect and Accept Contract Performance
- K4.1.3.1 Determine Supply Chain Requirements
- K4.1.3.2 Issue Subcontracts
- K4.1.4.1 Manage Contract Changes
- K4.1.4.2 Conduct Contract Interpretation
- K4.1.4.3 Determine Contract Termination
- K4.2.1.1 Validate Contract Performance
- K4.2.1.2 Verify Physical Contract Completion
- K4.2.1.3 Prepare Contract Completion Documents
- K4.2.1.4 Coordinate Final Disposition of Owner-Provided Property/Equipment/Information
- K4.2.1.5 Settle Subcontracts
- K4.2.1.6 Reconcile Contract
- K4.2.1.7 Make Final Payment
- K4.2.1.8 Evaluate Final Contract Performance
- K4.2.1.9 Finalize Contract
Sample Exam Questions

The following are sample entry level certification exam questions. The intent is to provide an indicator as to how the questions are constructed. The correct responses are in bold font. Also, there are no options on the exam with “all of the above”, “none of the above”, or any other option where multiple options are correct or incorrect.

1. The Award Life Cycle Phase is ________________________.
   a. the second of three life cycle phases
   b. the third of three life cycle phases
   c. under the Administer Contract competency
   d. under the Develop Solicitation & Offer competency

2. Which of the following job tasks is performed in the Post-Award Life Cycle Phase?
   a. Conduct Post-Sales Activities
   b. Execute Sales Plan
   c. Execute Solicitation Plan
   d. Plan for Contract Performance Delivery

Establishing the Passing Score

The passing score for the entry level certification exam is determined by sound psychometric analysis. In addition, NCMA uses subject matter experts – contract management professionals from all aspects of the profession (e.g. buyers, sellers, academics, etc.) – to determine how many questions you must answer correctly to pass the exam. All questions are valued at equal weight, and your final score is calculated by totaling the points you have earned on the exam.

NCMA Exam Security and Confidentiality

The exam, answer sheets, worksheets, and/or any other exam or exam-related materials remain the sole and exclusive property of NCMA. These materials are confidential and, unless directed by valid and lawful subpoena or court order, are not available for review by any person or organization for any reason.

Exam (pass/fail) results are confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone without candidate consent, unless directed by valid and lawful subpoena or court order. If you would like your exam results to be released to a third party, you must provide NCMA with a written request that specifically identifies the types of details (e.g., exam date, pass/fail status, etc.) about the exam results that the third-party person or organization should receive.

When you submit any NCMA certification application, you agree to abide by the NCMA Exam Confidentiality Agreement (found in this handbook). Among other things, this document addresses post-exam questions and discussions. It states: “...Furthermore, I agree not to discuss, debrief or disclose, in any manner, the specific content of NCMA exam questions and answers, to any individual.”

Any such discussion would be a potential violation of the Certification Policies & Procedures Agreement and thus, could affect the status of your certification, up to and including revocation of your certification or permanent suspension from any NCMA certification exams.
Preliminary Exam Scores

Any score provided at the conclusion of a candidate’s testing session is considered preliminary until the candidate receives notice from NCMA that the result is official.

Exam Report

Exam results are provided immediately on-screen after submission (results will not be printed by the Testing Center). However, any score provided at the conclusion of a candidate’s exam session is considered preliminary until the candidate receives notice from NCMA that the result is official.

Reexamination(s) Policies and Procedures

When your application is approved, you are granted a one-year eligibility period in which to pass the exam. During the eligibility period, you may take the exam up to three (3) times because candidates do not always pass the exam on their first attempt. Gauge your time carefully to leave enough time during the eligibility period to retake the exam, if needed.

Reexam fees apply to the second and third attempts to pass the exam. If you do not pass the exam there is a required waiting period before you can sit for another attempt. The intent of this waiting period is to allow for additional exam preparation.

If your eligibility period expires without you passing the exam, you must reapply for the certification. The following figure presents reexam fees, wait periods, and other comments applicable to retaking exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempt 1 Exam Fee</td>
<td>$125 (US &amp; Canada)</td>
<td>To retest after attempt 1, you must wait 30 days and return to Step 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(payable when scheduling exam)</td>
<td>$150 (all others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt 2 Exam Fee</td>
<td>$125 (US &amp; Canada)</td>
<td>To retest after attempt 2, you must wait 60 days and return to Step 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(payable when scheduling exam)</td>
<td>$150 (all others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt 3 Exam Fee</td>
<td>$125 (US &amp; Canada)</td>
<td>To retest after attempt 3, you must wait 90 days and return to Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(payable when scheduling exam)</td>
<td>$150 (all others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved Application</td>
<td>TBD Member</td>
<td>15 business days to process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Good up to 1 year or 3 exam attempts)</td>
<td>TBD Nonmember</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entry level certification requirements and exam structure may be occasionally revised. It is your responsibility to understand the current requirements and exam structure. Please be sure to monitor this handbook for possible revisions. If you have any questions, please contact NCMA.

Step 5. Certification

Once you have been notified directly by NCMA that you have officially passed the exam and you have met all requirements, you are granted the entry level certification. You may refer to yourself as an entry level certification holder as long as you have an active certification status. You are authorized to use the entry level certification designation in block letters after your name on business cards, personal letterhead, resumes, websites, and in your email signature.

Please note that as part of the application process, you agreed to adhere to the NCMA Certification Policies and Procedures Agreement and the NCMA Code of Ethics. This means, among other things, that
you will only use the entry level certification designation in the manner stated above and that you will not use the entry level certification designation in company names, domain names, product names, or any other unauthorized manner.

Certificate
Your certificate and letter will be mailed to you at the beginning of the next month following certification.

Public Information
Upon request, NCMA will verify and provide information as to whether an individual holds a current, valid certification and the scope of that certification, except where the law requires such information not to be disclosed.

Step 6. Recertification
Immediately upon certification, the 3-year recertification cycle starts. To continue to hold the entry level certification in good standing, you are required to earn forty (40) Continuing Professional Education (CPE) and recertify by December 31 following three (3) full years of certification. In addition, in every even numbered recertification cycle, certificants must pass the exam again.

For instance, if you earn the entry level certification any time in 2021, you must recertify by December 31, 2024 with 40 CPE. Following this same example, the next recertification cycle will end on December 31, 2027. Since this will be an even numbered recertification cycle, in addition to the 40 CPE the exam must be passed again.

As you approach the end of your 3-year cycle, as a courtesy, NCMA will send emails to remind you of your need to recertify. These notices will be sent to the email you have on file with NCMA. Please keep in mind that you are responsible to keep your email address up to date. If your email is not up to date, you will not receive the reminders.

It is the responsibility of the certificant to track, plan, and achieve the recertification requirements.

The entry level recertification requirements may be revised from time to time. When revisions occur, NCMA will make a public announcement and contact you as a certificant in good standing at the email address in your NCMA profile. However, it is your responsibility to understand and comply with the current requirements to be recertified. If you have any questions, please contact NCMA.

Recertification Program Overview
NCMA’s recertification requirements support the continuous learning expected of our certification holders so they are always prepared to meet the demands of today’s complex business environment. The purpose of the program is to:

- Enhance continuous learning and development among certification holders,
- Provide direction in development areas to ensure relevancy of certified practitioners,
- Encourage and recognize individualized learning opportunities,
- Offer a mechanism for attaining and recording professional development activities, and
- Sustain the value of NCMA certifications.

Everyone who earns an entry level certification must actively maintain their certification(s) through continuous learning and renewal of their certification(s) every 3 years.
Being actively engaged in professional development and learning activities allows certification holders to earn CPE, fulfilling the continuing certification requirements and ultimately growing and developing as a practitioner.

NCMA recognizes that each individual has different professional needs and desires. The recertification program is designed to be flexible so it can adapt to those needs and allow you to customize your activities. The program provides a general framework and guidance—you determine your ultimate development path.

For details and instructions on how to earn and track CPE, download the Contract Management Continuing Professional Education Guide™ (CPE Guide™).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>CPE Requirement</th>
<th>Exam Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recertification Application</td>
<td>$95 Member/$145 Nonmember</td>
<td>Evidence of 40 CPE (must conform to CPE Guide™)</td>
<td>Pass the exam on every even numbered cycle (testing center fees apply)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application Review**

The application review will take up to 15 business days to process. Please keep in mind that:

- You agree to abide by the NCMA Code of Ethics and the NCMA Certification Policies & Procedures Agreement;
- The same type of documentation used to verify CPE in recertification is the same as that used in the certification process; and
- Any requests for additional information on an incomplete recertification application does not extend the recertification deadline.

**Recertification Notification**

Upon recertification, NCMA will issue a letter to recognize the accomplishment along with a gold seal with the updated year of recertification to place on your certificate.

**Step 7. Retired Status**

The retired certification status allows individuals to continue to be recognized for achieving NCMA certification(s) after leaving the contract management profession or related fields. Retired certification status does not require the CPE requirements of the active certifications, which may no longer provide value to a retired individual.

**Eligibility**

Those eligible to apply for the retired certification status must meet the following criteria:

- The individual must hold an active entry level certification in good standing for at least 10 years;
- Provide 40 CPE hours and if in an even numbered recertification cycle, pass the exam again; and
- The individual must be, or soon to be, separated from the contract management profession or related fields.

**Applying**

- Applicants must complete the retired certification application form and include a one-time, nonrefundable $95 (NCMA member)/$145 (nonmember) application fee.
- Individuals with a retired certification status designation must adhere to the same Code of Ethics as active certificants and may be subject to revocation in the event of a Code violation.
• If the individual with the retired certification status becomes re-employed within the contract management profession or a related field, he or she must discontinue use of the retired status designation and reactivate the certification.

• Applicants are not required to be NCMA members to hold the retired certification status.

Rights and Privileges

Individuals who qualify for retired certification status may use the applicable NCMA certification followed by the retired designation (Retired) after their name and all forms of address to indicate their status. For example, "John Smith, CPCM® (Retired)" signifies a retired CPCM® certification.

Restrictions

Retired certification designees may not use the applicable NCMA certification without the "(Retired)" suffix, and they are not entitled to use or hold themselves out to the public as an active NCMA certificant.

Step 8. Credential Suspension

Certificants must plan accordingly and attain new CPE throughout the 3-year recertification cycle and, if necessary, pass the exam in the third year. Complete recertification applications must be submitted by December 31. Recertification applications postmarked or emailed after December 31 are considered "suspended." Applications submitted from January 1 to March 31 will be assessed an additional nonrefundable $75 late fee.

During this period of suspension, you are not authorized to present yourself as holding an active entry level certification.

Please keep in mind that any requests for additional information on an incomplete recertification application does not extend the suspension deadline.

Step 9. Credential Expiration

Applications received after March 31 are not accepted and the certification is expired. As of April 1, you are not authorized to present yourself as holding an active entry level certification.

To achieve an active entry level certification, the current certification process must be followed from the beginning. If you achieve an active entry level certification again, the effective date will be as of the current date NCMA notifies you of the accomplishment. You will not be retroactively certified to cover the gap in which you did not hold an active entry level certification.

Certification Complaints Process

All complaints regarding the certification process are governed by the NCMA Certification Complaints Procedures. Examples of a complaint include but are not limited to:

• Dissatisfaction with a certification process,
• Dissatisfaction with exam content, or
• Dissatisfaction with the exam administration.

All certification related complaints must be reported within 30 days of the event/incident cited, made in writing, and sent to NCMA:

• Via email at certification@ncmahq.org,
• Via postal mail at 21740 Beaumeade Circle, Suite 125, Ashburn, VA 20147, or
• Via web form at https://www.ncmahq.org/certification/certification-feedback-questions.
All complaints should include evidence supporting the reason for the complaint and the nature of the request, including all reasons why the action or decision should be changed. A complaint must include:

- Date;
- Name and e-mail address of the complainant;
- Name against whom the complaint is made, if applicable;
- Reference to the NCMA certification policy and/or procedure that was allegedly violated;
- A description of how the policy and/or procedure was allegedly violated; and
- Any applicable evidence that supports the complaint.

We will acknowledge, in writing, your complaint within 3 business days of receipt. If a complaint is missing any necessary information, you will be informed and allowed an additional 30 days to supply the missing information. If the required information is not submitted within that time, the request will be closed. The review and validation of the complaint will occur in a constructive, impartial, and timely manner. You will be notified of the outcome within 3 business days of the decision being made. A record of the complaint, including any subsequent action(s) taken, and the decision made will be maintained by NCMA. All information pertaining to the complaint will remain confidential.

You have the right to appeal the decision on your complaint within 10 calendar days of the notification of the decision rendered. The appeal must be submitted in writing and can be sent via email or mail to one of the addresses listed above. Please see the following section for appeals procedures.

**Certification Appeals Process**

All challenges to NCMA’s Certification Program are governed by the NCMA Certification Appeals Procedure. This appeal process is the only method to review decisions made by NCMA regarding desired certification status. Examples of an appeal include but are not limited to:

- Rejection of a certification application,
- Decision of a filed complaint, or
- Failure to meet requirements resulting in a certification being suspended or terminated.

All certification related appeals must be reported within 30 days of the event/incident cited, made in writing, and sent to the NCMA Certification Staff:

- Via email at certification@ncmahq.org or
- Via postal mail at 21740 Beaumeade Circle, Suite 125, Ashburn, VA 20147.

To request an appeal, you must submit a request and include evidence supporting the reason for the appeal and the nature of the request, including all reasons why the action or decision should be changed. An appeal must include:

- Name and e-mail address of the appellant,
- A description of why the appeal should be granted, and
- Any applicable evidence that supports the appeal.

We will acknowledge, in writing, your appeal within 3 business days of receipt. The review and validation of the appeal will occur in a constructive, impartial, and timely manner. You will be notified of the appeal decision within 30 days of NCMA’s receipt of the appeal, unless circumstances warrant a delay. If a delay is expected, you will be notified. A record of the appeal, including any subsequent action(s) taken, and the decision made will be maintained by NCMA. All information pertaining to the appeal will remain confidential.