# **Continuing Care Assistant Certification Exam Handbook**



Continuing Care Assistant Program

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**Purpose** 

The Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) Program Certification Exam Handbook is designed to be a resource

available to instructors and exam candidates to aid in preparing for the CCA Certification Exam and

understanding the related processes. This handbook contains all of the relevant policies, procedures, and

documentation for candidates of the CCA Program who are interested in writing the exam. It is known to be

accurate at the time of publication, but the CCA Program Advisory Committee (PAC) reserves the right to

amend the contents of this handbook without prior notice.

In the province of Nova Scotia, CCAs are not regulated by legislation or governed by a regulatory body and,

therefore, responsibility for issues related to public interest and governance rests largely with the employer.

In the absence of a regulatory body, the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) supports

and provides oversight for the CCA Program. To assist in fulfilling this role, the DHW established the CCA

Program Advisory Committee (CCAPAC). CCAPAC is responsible to make recommendations to DHW on

matters concerning the curriculum standards, delivery compliance, certification process, and CCA Registry.

The CCA Program is managed by Health Association Nova Scotia (CCA Program Administration) under

contract with the DHW.

All forms and policies mentioned in this document can be found on the CCA Program's website

(www.novascotiacca.ca) under the Resource Tab, Education: Writing the Certification Exam unless another

location is identified.

For updates or further information, please contact:

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## Who is eligible for the exam?

To be eligible to write the CCA Certification Exam, candidates must meet all the requirements of the CCA Program prior to being granted a seat at the exam. Candidates are eligible to write the exam a total of three times within the 12 months following eligibility to write. Eligibility begins with the first available exam date after completion of the course. If the candidate requires an extension to the 12 month eligibility period he/she must apply to the CCA Program Administration by completing the application for Extension of Eligibility to Write Exam within the 12 month eligibility timeframe.

#### What are the specific eligibility requirements?

- Successful completion of the CCA course with a licensed education provider covering a minimum of:
  - o 522 theory/lab hours incorporating the CCA Curriculum Standards
  - o 190 hours placement in a Department of Health and Wellness funded Nursing Home/Home for the Aged
  - 80 hours placement in a Home Care Agency providing care to Department of Health and Wellness funded clients
  - o 60 hours placement in an CCA Program approved health care setting
- Completed Competency Assessment Tool (CAT) confirming competent practice, professional behaviour and completion of the required theory/lab and placements
- Maintain current and valid certification in the six required NS certificates:
  - o NS Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementia Care Course (ADODCC)
  - o Occupational Health and Safety
  - o Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)
  - Food Hygiene
  - o NS Palliative Care Front Line Course
  - o Standard First Aid/CPR Level C

All components of the CCA Program including the first exam writing (or registered for next available exam) must be completed within a maximum of 24 months (2 years) of starting the CCA Program with a licensed education provider. When all requirements of the Program have been completed, including passing the Certification Exam, the candidate will receive his/her Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness CCA Certificate from the CCA Program Administration.

<sup>\*</sup>All components are subject to verification by the CCAPAC.

<sup>\*</sup>Recognizing Prior Learning graduates will have received credit for some of the components as determined by their licensed education provider.

## When and where does the exam take place?

Certification exams are offered three times every year across Nova Scotia. Each exam will take place on a weekday during the last week of March, June, and October (exam months may change based on province wide course end dates). All exams will be written in the morning, the exam doors close and exam instructions begin promptly at 10:00 am, unless otherwise specified. Entrance to the exam is not permitted after 10:00 am.

Specific dates and locations will be provided annually to education providers and can be confirmed through the CCA Program Administration. Some exam sittings may be cancelled if not required, and notice will be given to those affected by the decision. For weather-related cancellations, the status of the exam will be posted on the CCA Program website. If schools are closed in the exam location due to weather; the exam will be cancelled.

## How does the registration process work?

Candidates are registered for their first exam writing through the education provider. Education providers should reserve space for their class all at once and educators are encouraged to do so at the beginning of the course. Education providers are required to complete and submit the <a href="Exam Registration Form">Exam Registration Form</a> to reserve their preferred location.

When a candidate is eligible to write the exam, proof of successful completion of all eligibility requirements must be submitted to the CCA Program Administration by the education provider to register a candidate for the exam sitting. The education provider does this by submitting the candidate's completed Competency Assessment Tool (CAT) booklet, including all required signatures, initials, and comments to the CCA Program Administration. The deadline for candidate registration (submission of Competency Assessment Tool booklets [CAT]) is a minimum of three (3) weeks prior to the exam date, which typically refers to the first of the month i.e., June 1<sup>st</sup> for the June exam). Failure to register the minimum of (3) weeks prior to the exam date could result in delays in processing the request and the request could be rejected. Candidates may have to wait to write the exam at the next scheduled session.

As noted above, registration should begin prior to the CATs being completed, in an effort to provide sufficient advance notice, but registration of the candidate(s) will not be finalized until the CAT booklet is approved. The registration process may be delayed or rejected if the CAT is incomplete or inaccurate. The CAT is sent by the education provider to the CCA Program Administration Office for approval as part of the registration process; however, the CAT will be returned to the candidate upon completing the exam.

#### Registering for Exam Rewrites

For exam rewrites, it is the responsibility of the candidates to submit the completed Exam Rewrite Registration Form with payment to the CCA Program Administration at least three weeks prior to the exam date. Failure to register the minimum of (3) weeks prior to the exam date could result in delays in processing the request and the request could be rejected. Candidates may have to wait to write the exam at the next scheduled session. Rewrite forms are sent to the unsuccessful candidates with their exam results. Information on rewriting the exam found at <a href="https://www.novascotiacca.ca">www.novascotiacca.ca</a> under the Education tab.

## Are there any fees?

The fee for the first exam writing is included in the administrative fee of the CCA Program, paid by the candidate to the education provider and submitted by the education provider to the CCA Program Administration. Candidates rewriting the exam, please see the "What happens if a candidate fails?" section for applicable fees. CCA Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) Program candidates must pay the administration fee directly to the CCA Program Administration prior to writing the exam.

## Are disability accommodations available?

Accommodations are designed to remove disadvantages and ensure all candidates receive an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Disability related accommodations, typically for documented physical or learning disabilities are granted on a case-by-case basis, subject to approval by the CCA Exam Committee or delegate. Candidates who require accommodations submit a request, in writing, through their educators four (4) months prior to the exam<sup>1</sup>. The request must includes an application form outlining the type of accommodation required, describing the reasons for accommodation, details of accommodations provided throughout the course by the education provider, the education provider's form, and the required documentation identifying the disability (for example a medical or psycho-educational assessment).

Possible accommodations may include extra time, a variety of reading and/or scribing assistance, and/or a separate room. It is the responsibility of the candidate to request accommodations and participate in the accommodations process by providing additional information upon request and aiding in arranging for an exam location and proctor in some cases, and candidates are responsible for any costs arising from these arrangements.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Current Policy effective September 1, 2013

Once accommodations have been granted to a candidate for the exam sitting the candidate is not required to go through application process again if a rewrite is required. However, the candidate is required to request accommodations when he/she registers for exam writing by submitting, in addition to the <a href="Exam Rewrite">Exam Rewrite</a> Registration Form and exam fee were applicable, the <a href="Proctor Registration Form">Proctor Registration Form</a> three weeks in advance of the exam date.

Accommodation requests are not automatically granted. Decisions are made within two (2) months2 of the exam date. Applicants will be notified directly and in writing about the status of their request. More specific information on the disability accommodation policy, along with the appropriate forms, can be found on the CCA Program website at www.novascotiacca.ca under the Education tab or the Resource tab and in the Exam folder. Updates and revisions to this policy will be made available through the website.

## What is the best way to prepare for the exam?

The exam is designed to accurately measure a candidate's knowledge of the information covered during the curriculum delivery. The best method of preparing for the exam is to carefully review class notes, materials, resources, and reflect on all placement and practical experiences. The exam is closed-book, and no notes or reference materials will be allowed at the candidate's desk. Instructors may assist candidates with studying strategies, reviewing materials, or general test-taking preparation prior to the exam.

#### **Exam Preparation Tools**

There are exam preparation tools available to help you prepare for the CCA Certification Exam. We recommend you start utilizing these tools from the start of your course. You can find these tools on the CCA Program website www.novascotiacca.ca under the Resource tab in the Exam folder.

- CCA Certification Exam Preparation Tips
- Tips for Answering Multiple Choice Questions
- Practice Exam and Answer Key

## Familiarize yourself with an exam bubble sheet

Bubble sheets are used to answer the exam questions which are scanned by a computer; it is very important the candidate use the bubble sheet correctly. See Appendix A for a sample bubble sheet. A #2 pencil is required to fill the information and answers on the bubble sheet. When choosing the answer, make full, dark marks to completely cover and fill in the bubble. To change an answer, make

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid

sure the wrong answer is fully erased. The upper right corner of the page provides directions about how to fill in the bubbles. All other bubbles should be left blank.

On the front of the bubble sheet candidates are required to fill in:

- ID number: Candidates will be given an ID number at the registration desk on the day of the exam. Fill in both the written number and the corresponding bubbles from left to right.
- Test Form: The Test Version is indicated on the front page of the exam document. Fill in the Test Version in the Test Form section.
- Exam #: This section is to be left blank.
- Name: Fill in your name.
- Subject: Fill in CCA Exam.
- Date: Fill in the exam date.
- Answer Columns: 1 to 200 answer areas are available for the question that corresponds on the exam. All answers must be on the bubble sheet to be counted. There will be 150 scored questions on the exam plus 5 demographic questions that are not scored.

On the back of the bubble sheet candidates are required to fill in:

- Instructor: The primary instructors name for the education institution
- Class: The name and specific campus of the school candidate graduated from CCA Program
- Hour/Day: left blank
- ID Number: same as front side
- Area Code and Phone Number: fill in both the actual number and the corresponding bubbles
- Last Name/First Name: fill in both your written name and corresponding bubbles

All of the above information is very important and must be filled in on the bubble sheet to ensure your exam score is marked and assigned correctly.

## What is the exam going to be like?

The exam contains 150 multiple-choice questions that cover all content areas from the curriculum standards. The questions for the exam are carefully written and chosen by experts in the health care field and educational testing, and they vary in difficulty from easy to hard. Questions may inquire about facts and knowledge (e.g., terminology or anatomy), applications, procedures, or critical thinking.

For each question, there is only one correct answer, although others may seem tempting. Candidates must select the best response and clearly mark their choice on the corresponding answer (bubble) sheet. It is to the candidate's advantage to guess if they do not know the answer, as there will be no penalty for incorrect guesses. Answer sheets will be marked electronically, so it is important to only use a No. 2 pencil and always make clear, dark marks, and to fully erase any errors.

A group of informational questions at the end of the exam will be included, but they will not count toward the candidate's total score. These questions ask about general demographics (focused on Canada's protected

groups<sup>3</sup>). The purpose of these questions is to gather information about the candidates enabling the exam to be analyzed for bias and fairness, so that all candidates receive an equal opportunity to succeed.

Responses to these demographic questions are voluntary, but encouraged, and they will not influence the candidate's exam score in any way. It is strongly recommended that candidates provide honest responses, because it will assist the exam developers in making sure the exam is fair for all candidates.

## What happens on the day of the exam?

Candidates should confirm that they are registered for the appropriate date and time of the exam through their education provider to ensure their CAT booklet has been submitted and approved. For candidates who are rewriting the exam, submission of the Exam Rewrite Registration Form and rewrite fee is required—see Registering for Exam Rewrites. Rewrite confirmation will be provided as per candidate's request on form.

On the morning of the exam, it is advised that candidates arrive at the testing location by 9:15 am, allowing 45 minutes to check in and get settled before the exam starts.

Upon arrival, candidates check in with the exam proctors. The exam proctors confirm candidate attendance according to a master list. Candidates must display non-expired government-issued photo identification (i.e., driver's license or passport) in order to gain entry to the exam. Alternatively, it is acceptable to present a government-issued ID (i.e., health card) along with another identification card that includes a photo (i.e., student ID). The names on both cards will be compared and must be an exact match. If appropriate identification cannot be provided, candidates will not be permitted to enter the exam and must contact the CCA Program Administration to reschedule.

- Candidates will be given an ID number that must be included on both sides of their answer sheet in order for their question responses to be counted.
- Candidates will receive the Information Release Form, on which candidates must update all contact information and grant or deny permission in releasing contact information and certification confirmation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Canada's designated groups include women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities. An aboriginal person is defined by the Employment Equity Act as a person who is Indian, Inuit or Metis. A member of a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act is a person, other than aboriginal, who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401/

• Candidates will also receive a Student Satisfaction Questionnaire, a survey about their experiences in the classroom, placements, and with the exam. This survey is confidential to the CCAPAC, and names are not required, but it is important that candidates respond to all the questions (2-sided form).

The proctor will guide candidates through completing the forms, setting up the answer sheet, and exam instructions, beginning promptly at 10:00 am. Candidates will have 2 hours after the instructions are complete to write the exam.

Candidates arriving after 10:00 am will not be admitted into the exam and must contact the CCA Program Administration to reschedule. If candidates need to use the restroom, they must do so before the exam begins. Government-issued photo ID is required to re-enter the testing room. Candidates are not permitted to leave the exam room (without a pre-approved medical note) until their exam and corresponding forms have been collected and checked by the proctor. Candidates must comply with the rules and regulations of the testing facility at all times.

### What is inappropriate behaviour?

Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, and the proctor has the authority to move seats or take away their exam if candidates are suspected of cheating.

Candidates who are disruptive may be asked to leave the exam. Talking, excessive noise, or attempts to communicate with other candidates during the exam are not permitted.

Candidates may not have textbooks, notes, cell phones, or other personal devices at their desk during the exam, as it is considered a violation of exam procedures.

Proctors cannot answer questions about the content of the exam. If candidates identify an error on the exam (e.g., typo, page missing, etc.), the candidate should quietly raise his or her hand and inform the proctor.

For security purposes, all exam materials must not leave the testing room. Please make sure the exam, answer sheet, and all forms are completed correctly and returned to the exam proctor before exiting. It is forbidden under copyright law to copy, reproduce, or distribute any of the testing materials, in whole or in part.

#### What materials can be brought into the exam room?

The following items are permitted inside the testing room:

- #2 pencils (candidate required to bring)
- Erasers (candidate required to bring)
- Watch or timer. (If candidates choose to bring a watch or timer, please make sure it does not beep or buzz, as this may be distracting to other candidates.)

Items that are not permitted in the testing room include notes, textbooks, and all snacks or beverages, due to facility restrictions. Personal belongings must be placed at the front of the testing room, away from the candidate's workspace. The use of personal electronic devices is prohibited during the exam period. All electronic devices (such as cellphones) must be shut off completely throughout the exam and not visible on or near a candidate's desk.

## How long is the exam?

Candidates are given up to **2 hours** after exam instructions to complete the exam. This allows the candidate to spend about 45 seconds for each question, which is typically enough time to complete a question. It is expected that most candidates will finish before this time limit, and if this is the case, the candidates are free to leave after passing in all their paperwork to the proctor (i.e., exam, answer sheet, Information Release Form, Satisfaction Questionnaire). This time limit is subject to change in future exam administrations.

As noted above, candidates are encouraged to arrive by 9:15 am for registration to sign in for the exam session. The exam will begin promptly at 10:00am. At this time, proctors will read the instructions and prepare the paperwork, which may take approximately 15 minutes. This means the exam will finish at approximately 12:15 pm. Proctors are the official time-keepers during the exam session.

# What if a candidate can't attend the exam, after registering?

Unexpected events do occur, and the Program Administration acknowledges the possibility that candidates may not be able to attend, despite registering for an exam. If a candidate is unable to write the exam on the date for which he/she has registered there will be two more exam sessions within her/his 12 months eligibility period. If the candidate cannot attend, he/she must contact the CCA Program Administration to reschedule. The candidate may be permitted to write at the next scheduled exam session. Notification must be sent in writing to the CCA Program Administration, by email, mail, or fax, prior to the exam or within five (5) business days after the exam to avoid incurring extra fees.

Candidates must feel mentally and physically able to write the exam on the scheduled testing day. If the candidate feels unprepared or incapable after signing into the exam session, the candidate may notify the proctor he/she is withdrawing from the exam at any time, up until the exam begins, without the exam counting as an attempt. An attempt is counted once the candidate writes his/her name on the answer sheet and receives the exam booklet. Withdrawing without notifying the proctor will also be counted as an attempt.

When withdrawing after signing into the session, it is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the proctor, provide an explanation to the CCA Program Administration, and re-register for a later scheduled exam date. Exam proctors will report absences and withdrawals from the exam to the CCA Program Administration but will not re-register the candidate.

Candidates have a total of three (3) attempts to pass the exam within a 12-month period once they have been deemed eligible to write. If the candidate is unable to write the exam (including his/her possible two rewrites) in the 12-month period due to extenuating life-changing circumstances, they must apply, within the 12-month period, for an extension directly with the CCA Program Administration by completing the a <a href="Extension of Eligibility to Write Exam">Extension of Eligibility to Write Exam</a> form. Extensions will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Potential extenuating circumstances that may prevent a candidate from attending an exam may include a death in the family or serious injury or illness.

#### Will the registration fee be refunded?

Exam fees will not be refunded, but credit towards the next exam session may be provided if acceptable notification of cancellation is given prior to or within five (5) business days. It is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the CCA Program Administration as soon as a reason for the absence or cancellation is known.

Candidates who do not attend the exam and do not notify the Administration will forfeit their registration fee. Credit will not be provided for future exam dates. In the event of failure to notify of withdrawal in the appropriate time frame, the candidate will be required to pay a re-registration exam fee of \$150.00 plus HST (\$172.50) for his/her next exam sitting, payable to the Health Association Nova Scotia via cheque or money order. See Registering for Exam Rewrites section.

# What is the passing score?

The pass mark and a candidate's exact grade will not be released. The pass mark for each exam may vary according to the decisions of a panel of experts, but the expectations of the candidates will remain the

same. Prior to an exam, a panel of experts are asked to evaluate each exam question's difficulty resulting in individual judge's scores for each question. An average across all judges is calculated to provide an Angoff rating for each question. The Angoff rating for all questions is then averaged to create a reliable and psychometrically-sound pass mark score for the particular exam. This results in a fair and valid process, widely used in certification testing across North America.

The pass mark for each exam may be adjusted based on an analysis of the answer results for each question. If a question(s) is determined to be confusing and/or flawed the pass mark for the exam will be adjusted. Any adjustments to the pass mark due to the question analysis are always in the favour of the candidate.

#### How is the score determined?

All exams across the province are marked electronically in a central location. This method ensures that the exam is secure and confidential, and that all exams are treated in the same manner. The exams are scanned, one by one, and analyzed by software to calculate the total score and ensure exam fairness. All of the exam questions are reviewed for any issues or flaws. If a candidate is on the border between passing and failing, his/her exam is reviewed in detail to ensure accuracy of the electronic marking. Demographic information provided during the exam does not affect exam results in any way. All questions and the exams are thoroughly examined for accuracy and possible errors before any final decisions are released.

## How are results communicated?

Candidates will receive notice as to whether the individual has passed (at which time the student will receive a certificate) or failed (at which time the student will receive a notification letter and information about rewriting). Education providers receive notification of exam pass/fail results.

Results will be made available by mail in **4 to 6 weeks** after the testing date. Results will not be released by the CCA Program Administration by phone or by email for security purposes. The results will be sent to the address on file for each candidate. On the exam day, candidates are asked to provide their current contact information (mailing address, email, and phone number); should his/her contact information change, it is the candidate's responsibility to contact the Program Administration in writing to update the records.

Exam results are confidential and scores will only be used internally by the CCA Program Administration to further develop, improve, and refine the exam and individual questions. The pass/fail results of an individual candidate will not be made available to employers without the candidate's express written consent. No

identifying information will be disclosed, although aggregated and summarized reports will be produced that incorporate individual results anonymously and provided to the education providers.

## What happens if a candidate fails?

For candidates who do not pass their first exam writing, they are eligible for two (2) attempts to rewrite the exam, for a total of three (3) attempts at passing the Certification Exam. All three attempts to pass the certification exam (first writing and two rewrite opportunities) must be made within 12 months of becoming eligible to write the exam (eligibility begins with the first available exam date after completion of the course). If the candidate is unsuccessful, they will be notified of his/her future opportunity(s) to rewrite the exam and his/her eligibility timeframe.

If the candidate is unable to write the exam (including his/her possible two rewrites) in the 12 month period due to extenuating circumstances, they must apply for an extension directly with the CCA Program Administration by completing the a Extension of Eligibility to Write Exam form. Extensions must be requested before the 12 month period has ended and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Potential extenuating circumstances that may prevent a candidate from attending an exam may include a death in the family or serious injury or illness.

There are three (3) exam sessions offered each year at various provincial locations so candidates should have ample time to become certified. For example, if the candidate completes their course in May, their first eligible exam date is June. They are permitted to write any of their three attempts in June, October, March, and the following June but the following October is beyond their eligibility time period.

In the second and third attempts to rewrite the exam, the exam will not be the same version as the initial attempt. Instead, the exam will cover the same range of material with different questions, and candidates will still be held to the same standards to achieve a passing mark.

The fee to rewrite the exam is \$150.00 plus HST (\$172.50). This can be paid by cheque or money order to the Health Association Nova Scotia (2 Dartmouth Rd., Bedford, NS, B4A 2K7). Candidates must register and pay three (3) weeks in advance of all exam dates. To register, use the Exam Rewrite Registration Form provided in notification letter.

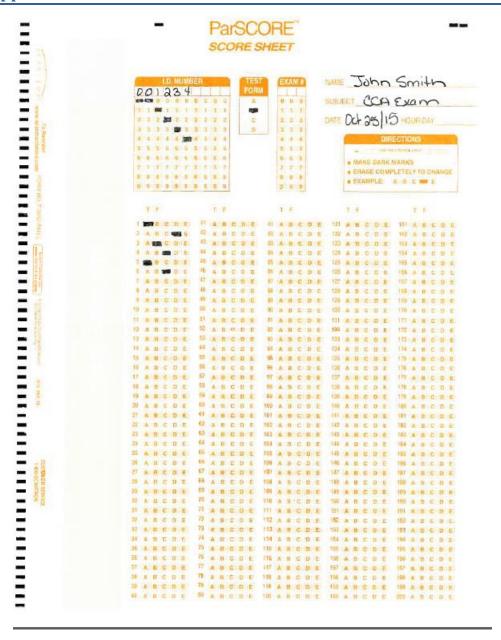
If the candidate feels unprepared or incapable, they are welcome to withdraw from an exam sitting by notifying the proctor, quietly excusing themselves, and registering for the next exam by contacting the CCA Program Administration. All three exam writing opportunities must be made within 12 months of becoming eligible to write the exam; there will be three exam sessions within the 12 month period for the candidate to

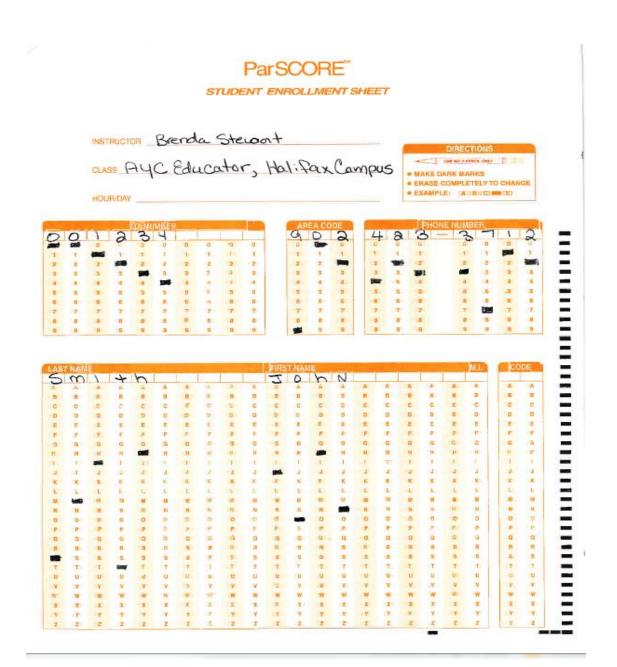
write his/her eligible three attempts if required. An attempt counts once the candidate writes their name on the answer sheet and receives their exam booklet. Registration fees for missed exam dates will not be refunded, but credit may be provided for future exam sessions with written notification of withdrawal if provided as required (see "What if a candidate can't attend the exam, after being registered?" section). It is the candidate's responsibility to contact the CCA Program Administration if they cannot attend.

If the candidate fails an exam writing (first and/or second), the CCA Program recommends he/she seek additional support from his/her education provider before attempting another writing. If the candidate fails a third writing of the exam, he/she is no longer eligible for CCA Certification. If the candidate does not write and pass the Certification Exam within the 12 month timeframe and does not apply for an extension, he/she is no longer eligible for CCA Certification.

#### Can candidates review the exam and their answers?

For security purposes, candidates are not permitted to review exam content. If a candidate fails any attempt, they may request feedback about their general performance on the exam based on the Curriculum Standards modules by contacting the CCA Program Administration. The report will highlight their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can focus their studying efforts for their next attempt.





Please direct inquiries to:

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