

Tips for the HFMA Certification Exam Candidate

Registering for the exam

- ✓ If you are an HFMA member, you are eligible to take the exam.
- ✓ HFMA National must receive exam applications and payment at least 10 business days prior to the scheduled exam date. Exams applications are available on the HFMA website at:
http://www.hfma.org/login/index.cfm?script_name=/site/certification/exam_application.cfm
- ✓ Candidates and approved proctors are issued passwords in an e-mail about two business days prior to the scheduled exam.

Preparing for the exam

People learn differently and should employ the techniques that are most effective for them and conducive to their preferred learning style.

- ✓ **Complete the HFMA self-study course** and all of the review activities. All certification exam questions are based on content covered in the current version of the course. On the average, the course takes about 12 to 15 hours to complete. Draw upon your professional experiences as you complete the course and prepare for the exam. The course assumes you are beginning with some baseline knowledge.
- ✓ **Attend a coaching course/review session** relatively close to the time you plan to take the exam.
 - If you have already completed the corresponding self-study course, the coaching course can serve as a review of the course content.
 - If you have not yet completed the self-study course, the coaching course can serve as an introduction and an overview of the materials covered.
 - Once you complete, the coaching course, review the materials within the next few days. The closer the review is completed to the course, the more likely you are to commit some of the materials to long-term memory.
- ✓ **Find a comfortable place to study** with good lighting and few distractions. Stay focused on the task at hand. Complete your review of the content as close to the time you plan to complete the exam as possible to ensure the materials are “fresh in your mind.”
- ✓ **Budget your time** and make sure you have enough time to study and be well-prepared. Allow adequate time in advance to the scheduled exam date to review the materials multiple times and avoid “cramming” for the exam. Exam candidates tell us they typically spend 20 additional hours reviewing the content.
- ✓ **Pace your studying.** You are likely to retain more of the information if you spend time studying some of the materials over a period of time versus trying to study all of the materials in a day or two. By studying everyday, you are more likely to commit the information to your long-term memory. If you study at the last minute and attempt to “cram” for the exam, you are less likely to remember the information.
- ✓ **Take short breaks frequently.** Research shows that the information you remember most is what you first and most recently studied. Breaks also allow some time to reflect on what you just studied.

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- ✓ Establish ways to **“quiz” yourself** on what you just studied. Use the self-assessment activities at the end of each chapter or the test at the end of the self-study course. (None of these questions are on the exam.) If you are in a study group, quiz each other on key concepts.
- ✓ **Participate in study groups** with your peers. This allows you opportunity to review materials and to establish a support structure. It is also a way to grow your professional network.
- ✓ **Learn the general concepts first** and then focus on the detailed information associated with each of those concepts. Review the content multiple times and in multiple ways. The more you review the materials, the more information you are likely to retain.
- ✓ **Use the course syllabus as a guideline** for how you will divide your study/review time. The syllabus defines how the number of questions is allocated on the exam by chapter/section. Focus more review time on the areas from which a higher number of questions will be covered. Remember, all exam questions are based on content covered in the current version of the self-study materials.
- ✓ **Develop study notes** to be used for quick review of key concepts. Using multiple senses to review content, i.e., reading and writing the information, tends to improve retention of the information.

The day before the exam

- ✓ **Make sure you have received your password.** If not, contact the certification department at 1-800-252-4362, ask for certification.
- ✓ **Complete a quick review** of the materials to validate how much you know.
- ✓ **Get a good night’s sleep** the night before the exam. If you are well rested, you are likely to be more alert.
- ✓ Be sure to **review the Candidate Handbook** for acceptable procedures/behaviors during the exam. This is available at:
<http://www.hfma.org/certification/chfp/examapplication/CandidateHandbook.htm>

The day of the exam

- ✓ **Make sure you have eaten** before the exam to give you energy. Avoid heavy foods that may make you groggy.
- ✓ **Show up at the testing location about 10 minutes prior to your scheduled time** so you do not feel rushed. Allow yourself a few minutes to relax and get focused.
- ✓ **Arrive prepared.** Bring a calculator. They will not be supplied to you on the exam day. Do not bring your study materials or scarp paper—they will not be allowed in the testing room. Scratch paper, if needed, will be supplied to you – and any used scratch paper must be left with the proctor after you complete the exam.
- ✓ **Have your password available.** Only you have access to your password. Your proctor does not.

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Taking the Exam

- ✓ ***The exam is timed and clock does not stop running*** if you walk away from the exam. If you need to take a break, do so quickly to ensure not too much time is lost.
- ✓ ***Maintain a positive attitude*** and try to stay relaxed. If you start feeling anxious or nervous, take a few deep breaths and regain your composure.
- ✓ ***Don't rush***. Pace yourself. You have adequate time to complete the exam. Most candidates complete the exams in much less time than the allowed, although that does not mean you are in a race to finish early. Do not be concerned if others complete their exam before you are done.
- ✓ Always ***read a question in its entirety***. Look for key words. Don't "read" into a question. They are not designed to be "tricky".
- ✓ After reviewing the four available options, **eliminate the options that you know are incorrect**. You will increase the likelihood of selecting the correct answer.
- ✓ ***If you are unsure about a question, temporarily skip it*** until you have answered the other questions within that section. Remember that once you submit a section, you cannot go back to any questions in those sections.
- ✓ Prior to submitting a section on the exam, ***make sure you have answered all question within a section***. Unanswered questions are scored as incorrect. You are not penalized for guessing.
- ✓ ***Do not spend too much time second-guessing***. If you know the content fairly well, trust your instinct and go with your first choice for an answer.
- ✓ ***When submitting a completed section, click only once***. Clicking twice may cause the system to crash.

Next steps to become a CHFP

- ✓ ***If you were unsuccessful on the exam***, you are eligible to retake that exam after a requisite 90-day wait period. A new exam application with appropriate fees will need to be submitted to HFMA National.
- ✓ ***If you have successfully completed one exam***, you must successfully complete the second exam within two years.
- ✓ ***If you have successfully completed both exams*** and have been an HFMA member for two years, you may be eligible to become a CHFP. For information on the eligibility requirements and the application process, refer to the HFMA web site:

<http://www.hfma.org/certification/chfp/>