Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT CFP® CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Education Requirement

Q. How long do I have to complete the coursework requirement?

A. There is no deadline by which you must complete the education coursework requirement for CFP® certification. Please check with your coursework provider to determine if there are any deadlines on their end.

Q. Where do I find approved coursework?

A. You can find approved CFP Board education coursework by going to CFP.net/Programs.

Q. Can I bypass the coursework if I have a certain amount/type of professional experience?

A. No, experience does not qualify toward the coursework requirement. However, if you hold certain academic degrees or professional credentials, you may qualify for an accelerated path to completing the coursework. You can find more information on the Accelerated Path at CFP.net/AcceleratedPath.

Q. Do international degrees count for the degree requirement?

A. International degrees may be applied to the bachelor's degree requirement if they receive equivalency from a third-party evaluation agency that is a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). Applicants should request a general/document-by-document evaluation and submit results to transcripts@cfpboard.org showing equivalency of a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited U.S. institution.

Exam Requirement

Q. How do I register for the exam?

A. Register for the CFP® exam through your online CFP Board account at CFP.net/Login. Once you have paid the registration fee, you will schedule your testing appointment with Prometric.

Q. When do I receive my exam results?

A. Preliminary results are provided to you immediately after taking the exam. Official results are provided to candidates by email approximately 4 weeks following the close of the testing window.

Q. How do I cancel my registration?

A. The postponement fee is $500. Candidates may postpone an exam only once per registration. The subsequent exam appointment must be rescheduled within the next two exam administration testing windows. Candidates who decide not to pursue the exam after registering and wish to withdraw their application are eligible to receive a $200 refund. In order to withdraw from an exam or postpone your exam appointment, candidates must contact the Examinations team at examinations@cfpboard.org. Prometric will not be able to cancel your exam.

Q. How many times can I take the exam?

A. Individuals may attempt the exam a maximum of five times over their lifetime. Individuals may attempt the exam a maximum of three times within a 24-month period. If an individual fails the exam three times in a 24-month period, they must sit out three exam administrations before registering for another attempt.

Experience Requirement

Q. What qualifies as acceptable work experience?

A. Qualifying experience includes activities involving the delivery of financial planning services to individual clients. Whether your work experience involves directly working in personal financial planning, directly engaging with personal financial planners or conducting tasks in support of the personal financial planning process, there are many ways to complete the experience requirement.

Activities that do not relate to the personal financial planning process for clients (such as time spent in corporate finance, training, practice management, marketing, software development or administrative duties) cannot be included in your reported number of experience hours.

We encourage you to report all experience hours in your account for ultimate approval at CFP.net/ReportExperience.

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Q. My hours should count under the Apprenticeship Pathway, but they are only showing up under the Standard Pathway. What should I do?

A. The pathway your experience falls under is determined automatically by the system based on the information that you input. Common errors include the wrong experience type selected, missing primary elements of the personal financial planning process or the CFP Board ID number for the attester was not entered. If you need assistance adjusting your entry, please contact our Experience team at experience@cfpboard.org.

Q. What does it mean to submit my experience?

A. Once you meet the required number of hours, you will need to submit your entered experience by clicking the "Submit" button that will appear. Once submitted, each experience entry will have an updated status of Accepted, Pending Verification or Provisionally Accepted.

Q. Does part-time work count?

A. Yes. Hours are calculated at a one-to-one ratio based on the qualifying number of hours worked per week.

Q. How is experience verified?

A. Certain types of experience, including apprenticeship, indirect support, self-employment, pro bono and volunteer experience, automatically require verification before the experience can be "Accepted" or "Provisionally Accepted." Other experience may be randomly selected for verification before the experience can be "Accepted" or "Provisionally Accepted." An email request for verification will be sent to the supervisor you indicate in your submission.

Q. Why was my experience denied?

A. A review was conducted of your entry, and the entry does not meet qualifying standards for the Experience requirement. A denial may also mean that we did not hear back from you when we requested additional information. To discuss your entry, please contact our Experience team at experience@cfpboard.org.

Q. What does Provisionally Accepted mean?

A. It means your work experience has been accepted but is pending the successful completion of the CFP® exam and the official exam results.

Final Certification Requirements

Q. What does pre-CE mean?

A. Candidates who do not finish the CFP® certification process within 12 months of passing the CFP® exam begin to accrue a continuing education requirement at a rate of 1.25 CE credit hours per month. This accrual begins the 13th month after passing the exam and continues until the experience and degree requirements have been met. CE must be completed for the candidate to be eligible for certification.

Q. Can my background check be done before I take the exam?

A. You may submit your Application for Certification at any time after creating a CFP Board account. Your background check will be completed after you take the CFP® exam.

Q. How will I be notified that my Ethics requirement is completed?

A. Your CFP Board account dashboard will be updated to indicate a "Verified" status next to the Ethics requirement.

Q. When can I make my payment?

A. You can make your payment in your online account after you complete the education (bachelor's degree and education coursework), examination, experience and ethics requirements.

Q. How is payment calculated?

A. Your initial certification cycle will be defined after you complete the education (bachelor's degree and coursework), exam, experience and ethics requirements. CFP Board establishes this initial certification cycle by adding 12 months to the end of your birth month, based on your next birth date. The initial certification fee and the amount of continuing education (CE) credits due at the end of your initial cycle will be prorated to cover the length of your first certification cycle.

After this prorated cycle is completed, you will begin paying the $575 certification fee on an annual basis and reporting CE on a 2-year cycle. All fees are nonrefundable.

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