



CERTIFIED FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATOR™ (CFAA) CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

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Certified Financial Aid Administrator™ (CFAA) Candidate Handbook June 2019

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WELCOME

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators is excited to launch the Certified Financial Aid Administrator™ (CFAA) Program. Our certification program will provide financial aid administrators professional development opportunities that aim to:

- **Advance** and elevate the profession
- **Inspire** quality job performance
- **Create** a competitive edge

The CFAA will bring a valuable benchmark to our community, providing the foundation for continued professional development and career growth. Reviewing this Candidate Handbook is an important first step toward distinguishing yourself by earning the CFAA.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook summarizes key aspects of the CFAA Program and is intended to help you understand why the program was developed, how it is governed, its policies and procedures, and the steps to earning and maintaining the CFAA certification. The handbook is a useful reference to you as you:

- Decide whether to pursue the CFAA
- Determine what you need to do to meet the eligibility requirements of the CFAA
- Complete the CFAA application
- Study and prepare for the CFAA Exam
- Maintain the CFAA

As the CFAA is an evolving program, we encourage you to use this handbook as a supplement to the program information provided on the CFAA Program webpages (www.nasfaa.org/cfaa), as well as the information provided by NASFAA's credentialing staff. CFAA Program staff may be contacted at cfaa@nasfaa.org.

CFAA Commission

The Commission of the Certified Financial Aid Administrator™ (CFAA) Program serves as the independent certifying body of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). The Commission awards the CFAA certification, and sets policy and standards related to the CFAA Program.

The Commission was founded in January 2019 and has worked diligently to deliver a quality certification program to the financial aid community. To learn more about the CFAA Commission members, visit the CFAA Commission webpage (https://www.nasfaa.org/cfaa_commission).

BACKGROUND

How Was the CFAA Program Developed?

The Certified Financial Aid Administrator™ is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance, and designate individuals who demonstrate knowledge essential to the practice of financial aid administration. Founded in 2018, the CFAA Program has built upon an excellent training and recognition programs established by NASFAA. NASFAA currently offers 17 credentials that measure a candidate's topical competency. Since their inception in 2012, these credentials have grown in popularity, with more than 15,000 conferred. The CFAA program is the next natural step in our efforts to further the careers of people like you — financial aid professionals across the country.

NASFAA contracted with a certification industry expert to establish the eligibility requirements and materials for the CFAA certification program. They were tasked with conducting a scientific process of developing an exam that candidates must pass to demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge to be a qualified CFAA. A national Job Task Analysis (JTA) was conducted in fall 2018 to develop a list of Task and Knowledge Statements, which define what a competent financial aid administrator should do and should know. The results of the JTA were reviewed by a representative panel of financial aid experts, who validated the scope and ensured that the content of the test reflects the day-to-day practice of financial aid administrators nationwide.

The results were organized into the CFAA Exam Content Outline, twelve knowledge domains and respective competencies that can be found on pages 8-13 of this handbook.

The CFAA Exam questions are written and reviewed by practicing financial aid administrators. Every question is also reviewed by a psychometrician—a trained expert in exam writing—prior to being selected for the test.

The exam question pool for the CFAA certification program will be updated on a regular basis to reflect current practices in financial aid administration. Individual questions that have been shown by statistical analysis to be unclear or unfair are modified or deleted from the pool.

The CFAA certification test has been designed to meet testing industry standards for validity and reliability.

- **Validity** is the degree to which the content of the test reflects the knowledge and skills required to perform the duties of a financial aid administrator in a competent manner.
- **Reliability** is the accuracy of the test results—that is, the degree to which the test results are free from error.

What Is the Purpose of the CFAA Designation?

The purpose of the CFAA Program is to:

- Enhance the future of the financial aid community;
- Inspire quality job performance;
- Encourage continuous learning; and
- Promote professional development.

The CFAA Program helps the higher education community and its stakeholders recognize financial aid administrators for their knowledge and experience, their role as stewards of taxpayer dollars and institutional funds, their contributions to the success of their institutions and their students, and their commitment to the highest standards of ethical behavior.

The CFAA Commission, with the assistance and advice of professionals in relevant fields, has attempted to develop a certification that will recognize accepted levels of expertise in the profession with the goal of improving professional standards in financial aid administration. However, no certification program can guarantee professional competence. In addition, given the frequent changes in recommended practice and Title IV laws and regulations, the CFAA Commission cannot warrant that the test materials will at all times reflect the most current state of the art. The CFAA Commission welcomes constructive comments and suggestions from the public and the profession.

What Are the Benefits of the CFAA Certification?

The CFAA Program has many beneficiaries, including financial aid administrators and their employers.

Benefits to financial aid administrators include:

- Recognition for knowledge and experience;
- Gaining a competitive edge;
- Advancing the overall professional; and
- Enhanced job opportunities.

Benefits to employers of CFAAs include:

- Protecting the institution from risk;
- Demonstrating foundational knowledge of trained staff; and
- Promoting continuous growth and training.

PREPARING FOR THE CFAA EXAM

Who Can Take the Exam?

Candidates must submit an online form that verifies each applicant meets the eligibility requirements to take the CFAA Exam. The online application documents your qualifying education, professional experience and knowledge, and agreement to adhere to NASFAA's Standards of Conduct and uphold NASFAA's Statement of Ethical Principles. All professional experience claimed must be complete at the time the application is submitted. The requirements are outlined below.

1. Education

All candidates must have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education.

2. Combination of Professional Experience and Demonstrated Knowledge Related to Financial Aid Administration

Candidates must be current or recent financial aid office employees of eligible institutions, or individuals with sufficient combination of experience and/or demonstrated knowledge related to the administration of Title IV aid at eligible institutions. “Eligible institutions” are institutions of postsecondary education that are eligible for Title IV Federal Student Aid, as identified on the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal School Code List.

Candidates must document a sufficient combination of professional experience and/or demonstrated knowledge related to financial aid administration, using the following guidelines:

- Five years or more of professional financial aid experience;
- Three years or more of professional financial aid experience and at least 7 NASFAA credentials;
- One year or more of professional financial aid experience and at least 12 NASFAA credentials;
- Earned a graduate degree in a financial aid related program; or
- Any other combination of experience and demonstrated knowledge deemed sufficient by the Commission, such as:
 - ◆ Part-time or work-study employment in the financial aid office,
 - ◆ Students in higher education administration seeking a career in financial aid,
 - ◆ Higher education professionals seeking to move from within another student services area, or
 - ◆ Consultants or retirees with prior financial aid office experience.

All qualifying professional experience must be complete at the time the application is submitted. Candidates will be required to upload a current resume as part of the application process.

3. Professional Conduct

Candidates must agree to adhere to NASFAA’s Code of Conduct and uphold NASFAA’s Statement of Ethical Principles. To qualify, the CFAA candidate must not:

- Be in default on a Title IV loan or owe an overpayment of Title IV funds;
- Have been engaged in the misuse of government funds;
- Have been determined to have committed fraud or other legal violation involving government funds;
- Have been suspended or debarred by a federal agency; or
- Have a felony conviction related to the acquisition, use, or expenditure of federal, state, or local government funds.

How Much Does It Cost?

Appendix A outlines the fees associated with the CFAA Program. There is a nonrefundable \$50 application fee. Upon approval of your application, you will purchase the CFAA Exam for \$375. If you do not pass the exam, you may purchase one retake exam for \$275 that must be used within one calendar year of the initial application acceptance.

To maintain your CFAA Designation, you must earn the minimum required recertification points and pay a recertification fee of \$300 within three years of the date you initially passed the CFAA Exam. The point system table in Appendix B lists approved recertification activities.

How Do I Apply?

You must complete the CFAA Exam Application to apply for the CFAA Exam. The application is available online. You may save your progress and return to complete the application, if needed. You will need to log into your MyNASFAA account to complete the application. If you are not a NASFAA member, you must create a free MyNASFAA account.

Prior to starting the CFAA Exam Application, you will want to make sure you have:

- A current version of your resume (pdf preferred); and
- Information regarding your highest degree earned, including the name of the institution and year the degree was earned.

When your application has been reviewed and approved, you will receive an email confirmation, which will include a link to purchase the CFAA Exam. You will select a testing window and schedule a remote proctoring session within the testing center. The CFAA Exam must be taken within one year of the application approval. If you do not take the test within the allotted timeframe, you must complete the application process again and pay all related fees.

If your application is denied, you will receive an email explaining why the application was not accepted. You may apply again when you believe you have addressed the concerns identified by the CFAA Application review team.

Is My Information Kept Confidential?

Certification applications and each candidate's performance on the CFAA Exam shall remain confidential unless otherwise required by law. The CFAA Program will release application and pass/fail information only to the candidate and only in writing.

There are circumstances that allow for exceptions to this confidentiality policy:

- NASFAA will publish a list of current CFAs made available by the CFAA Commission; and
- NASFAA may report any public disciplinary actions taken against a CFAA by the CFAA Commission.

For the complete policy on confidentiality, please see the *CFAA Commission Standing Rules and Policies*, Policy #1.

When and Where Is the Exam Given?

The CFAA Exam is taken online through NASFAA’s testing center under the supervision of a remote proctor. The test is administered during established testing windows. Upon approval of the application, CFAA Candidates must schedule an exam session using an online scheduling system available within NASFAA’s testing center.

The test is two hours in length, which begins after successfully connecting with your proctor. The proctor connection process typically takes about fifteen minutes, but may take up to a half-hour, so we recommend reserving two and a half hours for the testing experience. You will not be able to begin the connection process with your proctor until your scheduled start time.

Prior to the scheduled date and time of your exam, you must identify a location for taking the CFAA Exam that meets the testing requirements (see pages 15-16). You also must test the technology you plan to use to take the online exam. Your computer will need to meet the following requirements:

- Desktop computer or laptop (tablets, Chromebook and cell phones do not meet our requirements);
- Only one monitor is permitted during the exam and any other monitors must be powered off;
- A working built-in or external webcam and microphone;
- Internet speed must be at least 2 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload; however, 10 Mbps is strongly recommended for optimal performance;
 - ◆ Use of hot spots is not recommended, and
 - ◆ Test internet speed at: <https://www.speedtest.net/>;
- Browser with pop-up blocker disabled ([see instructions here](#)); and
- Do not use Internet Explorer to take the exam; instead, Google Chrome or Firefox are recommended.

Technical issues encountered during the exam may require rescheduling of the exam. The candidate must contact NASFAA to reschedule the exam (cfaa@nasfaa.org).

For more information on testing center policies, contact NASFAA credentialing staff at cfaa@nasfaa.org.

How Are Reasonable Accommodations Made?

The CFAA Commission will make reasonable efforts to accommodate eligible Candidates who provide detailed documented evidence of their disability or need for reasonable accommodations for the CFAA Exam. You must complete the “Testing Accommodations Request Form” to provide a written explanation of the requested accommodations specific to the CFAA Exam. You must include detailed supporting medical documentation from a qualified medical professional for this specific purpose, detailing the needed accommodation given the format and nature of the exam. Requests must be submitted **at least eight weeks prior to an exam testing window**.

The CFAA Program will endeavor to furnish the requested accommodations, provided that the request is made by the required deadline, and that the accommodation would not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test and would not result in an undue burden.

What Is the Format of the Exam?

The CFAA Exam is offered in a single two-hour session, not including the time it takes to connect with your proctor. You will be presented with approximately 115 multiple-choice questions. Each question contains three options or choices, only one of which is the correct or best answer.

What Do I Need to Know for the Exam?

The JTA conducted in Fall 2018 resulted in the current CFAA Exam Content Outline, which organizes competencies deemed essential to financial aid administration into twelve knowledge domains. The CFAA Exam Content Outline is found below.

CFAA Exam Content Outline

The composition of the exam is guided by extensive research on the job competencies performed and knowledge needed by financial aid administrators. This research is updated approximately every five years.

The following table summarizes the twelve major content areas—or “knowledge domains”—that guide the composition of the CFAA Exam, along with the percentage range of the test devoted to each area:

Content Area	Range
Institutional Eligibility	5-9%
Data Management	4-8%
Administrative Capability	7-11%
Consumer Information	5-9%
Cash Management	5-9%
Student Eligibility	9-13%
Cost of Attendance and Need Analysis	9-13%
Awarding and Packaging	7-11%
Verification	7-11%
Return of Title IV Funds	7-11%
Satisfactory Academic Progress	6-10%
Professional Judgment	5-9%

Note that the questions from each content area will be mixed throughout the exam. The entire set of questions will be presented in random order; questions will not be presented in content-area order.

The following is a detailed outline of the twelve major content areas, with the percentage range of the test devoted to each area in parentheses:

1. INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY (5-9%)

1. Apply institution's mission, vision and values to the administration of student financial aid
2. Define award year and loan periods according to federal student aid regulations using the institution's academic calendar
3. Evaluate the effect of institutional policies, procedures, and academic structures on program eligibility and student eligibility
4. Develop financial aid policies and procedures
5. Review financial aid policies and procedures
6. Administer financial aid policies and procedures
7. Differentiate between a policy and a procedure
8. Differentiate between a law and a regulation

2. DATA MANAGEMENT (4-8%)

1. Differentiate among federal systems and electronic processes used by institutions in the administration of federal student aid (e.g., COD, NSLDS, SAIG, FAA Access to CPS Online, E-APP, IFAP, EZ-Audit, G5, EdExpress, SAVE)
2. Define the role and responsibilities of the destination point administrator (DPA)
3. Resolve discrepancies between federal and institutional systems
4. Adhere to federal policies and regulations regarding data privacy, data sharing, and information security

3. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY (7-11%)

1. Utilize the resources available to financial aid administrators (e.g., state, regional and national professional associations, U.S. Department of Education resources [including IFAP], institution's policies & procedures)
2. Develop and execute written arrangements (including consortium and contractual agreements)
3. Comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations and standards for protection of all personally identifiable information (PII)
4. Define the purpose and requirements of the Program Participation Agreement (PPA) and the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR)
5. Provide program and fiscal records, individual student records, and policies and procedures to auditors
6. Define the purpose and requirements of the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP)

7. Adhere to recordkeeping requirements as specified in the Student Assistance General Provisions, as well as additional requirements specified for each of the federal student aid programs
8. Define the institutional eligibility requirements to participate in federal student aid
9. Adhere to the federal annual schedule of activities and deadlines required to administer federal student aid programs
10. Assess the need to report possible fraud and other criminal misconduct to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Inspector General (OIG)
11. Uphold an adequate system of internal checks and balances for authorizing federal student aid payments
12. Maintain a system of identifying discrepancies in all federal student aid-related information received by any school office
13. Ensure student completes a TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve (ATS).
14. Ensure students complete federal student loan entrance counseling prior to disbursement
15. Notify students of exit counseling requirements within required timeframe
16. Respond to disasters (e.g., relief, recovery, notification, reporting, responsibilities, student and parent's rights)

4. CONSUMER INFORMATION (5-9%)

1. Evaluate institutional compliance with required consumer information disclosures and reporting
2. Produce and disclose required financial assistance information to current and prospective students
3. Adhere to codes of conduct (e.g., preferred lender arrangements and student loan code of conduct) and conflict of interest policies
4. Ensure TEACH grant requirements are accurately communicated to students

5. CASH MANAGEMENT (5-9%)

1. Uphold a fiduciary responsibility to safeguard federal student aid funds
2. Define the requirements for disbursement, refunding, and returning federal student aid funds according to federal regulations, including student authorizations, late disbursements and post-withdrawal disbursements
3. Apply payment period rules to academic calendar (e.g., crossover payment)
4. Reconcile internal and external records of student financial aid funds, as required
5. Define required timeframe for notification to students of their student loan disbursements and options for cancellation and modification

6. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY (9-13%)

1. Authorize the disbursement of federal student aid funds according to regulations
2. Resolve any conflicting information (e.g., outside resources) used in determining student eligibility for federal student aid
3. Affirm school-determined student eligibility requirements (e.g., high school diploma, meets “regular” student definition, SAP) for federal student aid
4. Resolve Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) Comment Codes that affect student eligibility
5. Determine whether coursework meets student eligibility requirements (e.g., remedial, prerequisite, repeat, English for Speakers of Other Languages, career pathway, students with intellectual disabilities, preparatory, and teacher certification)

7. COST OF ATTENDANCE AND NEED ANALYSIS (9-13%)

1. Explain data elements used in the calculation of Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
2. Calculate an EFC using Federal Methodology (FM)
3. Estimate how changes in data elements will affect EFC
4. Calculate financial need
5. Determine the correct EFC based on the student’s enrollment period
6. Develop Cost of Attendance (COA) budgets
7. Assign COA budgets according to individual student records based on the student’s award period, actual or average tuition and fee rates (considering enrollment status), and estimated costs for housing, meals, transportation, books/supplies, childcare, and other personal expenses

8. AWARDING AND PACKAGING (7-11%)

1. Develop financial aid packaging policies that comply with federal student aid regulations
2. Ensure the student is not over-awarded due to other estimated financial assistance (EFA)
3. Award federal financial aid programs according to federal student aid regulations and institutional policy:
 - a. Calculate the amount of Federal Pell Grant based on enrollment status, EFC, COA, and Lifetime Eligibility Usage (LEU) using Pell payment schedules
 - b. Determine when proration is necessary for credit-hour, clock-hour and nonterm credit-hour programs
 - c. Define reasons and processes for recalculating Pell Grant
 - d. Calculate amount of Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant (IASG) for eligible students
 - e. Award TEACH grant to eligible students
 - f. Ensure that campus-based funds, including Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS), are available to all eligible student populations

- g. Ensure the federal mandated percentage of FWS authorization is paid to students employed in community service activities and as reading tutors
 - h. Differentiate between scheduled academic year (SAY) and borrower- based academic year (BBAY) for Federal Direct Loans
 - i. Explain the implications of exceeding the 150% subsidized usage limit (SULA) on Federal Direct Loans
 - j. Define a subsidized usage period and the maximum eligibility period
 - k. Define an eligible parent for a Federal Parent PLUS Loan
 - l. Explain the components of Federal Direct Loan repayment (e.g., grace period, repayment start date, deferment, forbearance)
 - m. Differentiate among the Federal Direct Loan repayment plans
4. Explain the implications of using summer aid (e.g., cost of attendance, academic calendar, EFC, award eligibility) including using summer as a header or a trailer in the packaging of federal student aid

9. VERIFICATION (7-11%)

1. Develop written verification policies and procedures
2. Review federal verification updates and compare to existing policies and procedures, including updates to tracking groups
3. Communicate verification selection, documentation, deadline requirements, and results to students
4. Review required documentation to complete verification and resolve any conflicting information
5. Update FAFSA data fields and submit those corrections via Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) or in FAA Access to CPS Online to obtain a reprocessed and valid ISIR
6. List the requirements for making interim disbursements

10. RETURN OF TITLE IV FUNDS (7-11%)

1. Develop and publish a policy for the treatment of federal student aid funds for students who are considered to have withdrawn, failed to establish attendance, leave of absence, or earned no passing grades
2. Differentiate between disbursed aid, aid that could have been disbursed and aid that cannot be disbursed
3. Utilize the appropriate withdrawal date to perform the Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4) calculation when a federal student aid recipient withdraws
4. Return unearned federal student aid funds by the appropriate deadline
5. Define requirements for making post- withdrawal disbursements
6. Provide required notifications to students on returned funds by deadline

7. Differentiate between a withdrawal change and enrollment status change (standard terms and modules within standard terms)

11. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (6-10%)

1. Explain the policy for the treatment of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) that includes qualitative, quantitative, and maximum timeframe components
2. Evaluate the quantitative, qualitative, and maximum timeframe components of SAP (e.g., pace, completion rate)
3. Administer a SAP policy that determines frequency of review, availability of warning and probation statuses, and appeal process including the use of academic plans
4. Explain how multiple degrees, credentials, and double majors affect satisfactory progress
5. Explain how incomplete, remedial, repeat, and transfer credit coursework affect satisfactory progress
6. Provide required notifications to students including reestablishing eligibility

12. PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT (5-9%)

1. Explain Professional Judgment (PJ) policies and procedures (e.g., dependency override, cost of attendance, adjustments to data elements, SAP, refusal to certify loans)
2. Provide guidance on the process and documents needed to request a PJ adjustment
3. Exercise PJ authority on a case-by-case basis to appropriately address special circumstance requests
4. Collect and maintain documentation that supports the special circumstances
5. Update FAFSA data fields and submit those corrections via Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) or in FAA Access to CPS Online to obtain a reprocessed and valid ISIR

How Do I Prepare for the CFAA Exam?

Review the CFAA Exam Content Outline (see pages 8-13) and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have a good understanding of the content area?
- Do I use this knowledge area regularly at work?

Plan your studying based on your answers to these questions. For example, for content areas you have a good understanding of and use every day, you may only need to do a quick review to prepare for the test, whereas for areas with which you are less familiar, you may decide that you need more in-depth study or training before taking the test.

Decide which resources will best help you to prepare for the test. The references listed in the Core Resources below may be helpful when you are reviewing the content areas included on the test. (Note: The listing of these references is intended for use as a study aid only; the CFAA Commission does not intend the list to imply endorsement of specific resources.)

You may choose to study on your own or you may decide to take a NASFAA U online course, review a NASFAA Self-Study Guide, or attend a training event at your state or region to gain a better understanding of one or more content areas. If you know other individuals in your area who are taking the test, you may want to form a study group.

CFAA Exam Core Resources

The following list constitutes a collection of resources aligned with the CFAA Exam Content Outline and would be useful in preparing to be a financial aid administrator and for preparing to take the CFAA Exam. The list is reviewed periodically, and additional references may be added.

These resources should not be interpreted as constituting the sole source of all CFAA Exam questions, nor should the list be construed as required reading. Each candidate should develop their own personal reading list and study plan, based on their individual needs and knowledge.

1. Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended
 - a. U.S. Code, Title 20, Chapter 28 (view [uscode.house.gov](https://www.uscode.house.gov))
 - b. U.S. Code, Title 42, Chapter 34 (view [uscode.house.gov](https://www.uscode.house.gov))
 - c. [NASFAA's Compiled Title IV Legislation](#) (membership required)*
2. Federal regulations
 - a. Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (view [eCFR.gov](https://www.ecfr.gov))
 - b. [NASFAA's Compiled Title IV Regulations](#) (membership required)*
3. U.S. Department of Education guidance (view [IFAP](#))
 - a. Dear Colleague Letters and Electronic Announcements
 - b. Federal Student Aid Handbook
 - c. FAFSA and FAFSA on the Web
 - d. The ISIR Guide
 - e. The SAR Comment Codes and Text Guide
 - f. The EFC Formula Guide
4. NASFAA (membership may be required)*
 - a. Student Aid Index
 - b. Self-Study Guides
 - c. Monographs
 - d. AskRegs Articles

* NASFAA's resources *complement* federal legislative and regulatory guidance published by the U.S. Department of Education; access to NASFAA's resources is not required to prepare for or to pass the CFAA Exam.

TAKING THE EXAM

What Are the Requirements During the Exam?

The CFAA Exam is given under strict security utilizing remote proctors. You will be required to show a valid, *unexpired* government-issued photo identification to confirm your identity prior to beginning the exam. Trained proctors will supervise the test remotely, through the use of a camera and microphone that must function properly for the duration of the exam. Irregularities observed during the exam, such as creating a disturbance, giving or receiving unauthorized information or aid from anyone else, or attempting to remove exam materials or notes from the testing room, may be sufficient cause to end your participation or to invalidate your scores. Irregularities may be identified by observation or suspicion by the proctor or may be evidenced by subsequent statistical analysis of answer submissions. The CFAA Commission reserves the right to investigate each incident of misconduct or irregularity.

Testing Requirements

1. You will receive a confirmation email immediately after scheduling your exam session that details important information about the testing process. You must be properly registered and present your valid, *unexpired* government-issued photo identification (for example, a driver's license) to the test proctor in order to be allowed to take the exam.
2. You are responsible for ensuring all technical requirements, as outlined on page 7.
3. You must have a working built-in or external webcam and microphone. You will be monitored by a remote proctor during the exam. A visual scan of the room may be performed before and during the exam.
4. You will need to complete the exam in a private, well-lit location, with a door that must remain closed for the duration of the exam.
5. There should be no material relating to the examination on the walls, floor, ceiling, or desk in the room.
6. Unauthorized persons will not be allowed in the testing room.
7. Workspace must be clear of paperwork. All books, binders, and notes must be removed from reach.
8. You may not use devices with memory capabilities. Audible beepers, cell phones, tablets, or books or papers must be removed from reach.
 - a. If you are disconnected from your remote proctor, they will attempt to contact you by phone. If a landline is unavailable within your testing room, a cell phone may be used for this purpose only.
9. All work must be completed online. An online calculator will be available within the testing center, along with a digital notepad. Note-taking on paper is prohibited during the exam.
10. This is a closed-book exam. It is not permitted to access reference materials during the exam.
11. You should launch your exam at the scheduled start time to check in with your proctor, verify your identity, and test your equipment.
12. You may not leave your computer during the two-hour testing period. Bathroom breaks are not permitted.
13. You are allowed to have a drink in a spill-proof container with no label.
14. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will not be able to complete the exam. It may be possible to reschedule the exam within the current testing window, subject to remote proctor availability.

Ethical Conduct Requirement

Before you take the test, you will be asked to agree to the Statement of Ethical Conduct:

- Due to the confidential nature of this test, I agree that I will not copy or retain test questions or transmit them in any form to any other person or organization.
- I agree that my actions will remain consistent with NASFAA's Code of Conduct and Statement of Ethical Principles.
- I agree that I will complete this exam independently and will not reference any materials during the exam.
- I agree that I will not leave the testing room until I have submitted the exam.

If you do not agree to these statements, you will not be able to access to the exam. The theft or attempted theft of the test or the copying or disclosure of test questions is punishable by law.

How Is the Exam Scored?

Your exam score is based on your total number of correct answers. You should answer all items, as there is no penalty for incorrect responses.

Your performance on the exam will be measured against a predetermined standard of knowledge using a criterion-referenced method. This standard is the foundational level of knowledge that can reasonably be expected of individuals with basic competence in Title IV financial aid administration. You will NOT be measured against the performance of the other individuals taking the CFAA Exam. This means that if everyone who takes the exam meets the knowledge standard, everyone will pass.

The passing score for the CFAA Exam is set with input from a panel of experts who are representative of the profession. These experts review each test question, evaluate the difficulty of the question, and make a judgment as to how a financial aid professional with foundational competence would perform on the question. These judgments are evaluated statistically using psychometric analysis to determine the appropriate passing score, which is then approved by the CFAA Commission. The passing score is not shared publicly.

What Information Will I Receive About My Score?

The CFAA Exam is designed only to distinguish those who have a foundational level of knowledge from those who do not. There is no evidence that someone who receives a very high score on the test will perform significantly better on the job than someone whose score falls exactly at the passing point. Therefore, you will only be notified whether you pass or do not pass the exam. You will NOT be notified of your actual score.

Along with your exam results, you will receive a diagnostic report showing your performance in each content area. If you do not pass, this information may assist you in deciding whether to retake the test and how to plan your study efforts for future tests.

When Will I Receive My Exam Results?

You will learn whether you passed the CFAA Exam immediately after submitting the exam. You also will be able to view a diagnostic report showing your performance in each content area.

What Options Are Available to Retake the Exam?

If you do not pass the CFAA Exam on the first attempt, you may request approval to retake the exam and pay the CFAA Exam Retake fee. You cannot retake the exam within the same testing window as the first attempt. Only one exam retake is allowed within the exam eligibility period, which is one year from the date your initial application was approved.

You must start the application process over again if the CFAA Exam is not taken within the one-year exam eligibility period, or if you do not pass the retake exam.

QUERIES, CHALLENGES AND APPEAL PROVISIONS

Queries and potential challenges of a CFAA applicant, candidate or certificant must be submitted to cfaa@nasfaa.org within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification of an adverse decision. NASFAA's CFAA Program staff will review all queries and provide guidance to the extent appropriate. If the query constitutes a challenge, the case will be referred to the CFAA Commission within ten (10) business days.

The following circumstances constitute a challenge:

- The CFAA Commission's interpretation of eligibility and recertification requirements;
- Exam administration procedures;
- Testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process; or
- Accuracy of exam content and/or keyed item responses.

The CFAA Commission shall then meet by teleconference within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification of the challenge by the Commission Chair. All determinations regarding challenges must be decided by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the CFAA Commission.

Notice of the CFAA Commission's determination shall be provided to the Challenger within ten (10) business days of the decision.

For additional information regarding this process, see the *CFAA Commission Standing Rules and Policies*, Policy #15.

CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

Certification maintenance is required for all CFAAs to encourage continued learning and professional development, and to promote continued advancement of knowledge and higher levels of excellence in financial aid administration. A three-year certification maintenance cycle ensures CFAAs remain involved continuously in training events and professional development opportunities, and promotes involvement in a variety of leadership, learning, and service activities.

Recertification

Once certified, you will reach your first certification renewal date exactly three years from the date you successfully passed the CFAA Exam. To maintain your CFAA designation, you must submit a recertification application prior to your recertification renewal date or the designation will expire. During this three-year period, you must earn at least 60 recertification points. All points must be earned within the three-year

recertification period, unless you are approved for Inactive Status. The point system table in Appendix B lists approved activities and associated point values.

Candidates who exceed recertification expectations by earning over 100 Recertification Points (RPs) will receive special recognition.

Points for certification renewal may be accumulated in a wide variety of ways. Financial aid administrators actively engaged in the profession should have little difficulty maintaining the CFAA certification. Qualifying activities for recertification points include:

- National, State, and/or Regional conference attendance
- Participation in a NASFAA U online course or NASFAA webinar
- Instruction at an Authorized Event Workshop
- Active annual financial aid association membership

You must be prepared to submit documentation to validate qualifying recertification points. Certification renewal requires payment of the recertification fee, accompanying the recertification application. Appendix C outlines the documents that will be required for each activity.

Once recertified, your next three-year recertification period begins on the date your recertification application is approved.

Inactive Status and Reactivation

Inactive Status is available to CFAAs who do not meet their renewal eligibility requirements, but who do not wish to permanently lose their certification status. Inactive status provides CFAAs with a one-year period beyond their period of active certification in which to meet the renewal eligibility requirements.

While an individual's status is inactive, the CFAA credential and designation MAY NOT be used.

To apply for Inactive Status, certificants must complete the appropriate form and pay the inactive status fee. Applications must be received prior to the end of the certification period for the request to be honored. Applicants may not apply for consecutive periods of Inactive Status.

The CFAA certification may be reactivated at any time during the inactive period as long as the renewal requirements are met. Reactivation will be approved by meeting the renewal requirements including payment of appropriate fees and fulfilling continuing education activity requirements or by re-examination. Continuing education credits must be accrued within the one year leading up to the resumption of certified status.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

The CFAA Commission does not discriminate against any person on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, religion or disability.

Note: This Handbook reflects the policies and procedures as of June 19, 2019. All policies and procedures are subject to change. If you have any questions or require further information, please visit www.nasfaa.org/cfaa or contact CFAA Program staff at cfaa@nasfaa.org.

Appendix A: CFAA Program Fees

The following information relates to the fees associated with CFAA Program:

- All fees are nonrefundable.
- A candidate who does not pass the CFAA Exam on the first attempt may request approval to retake the CFAA Exam and pay the CFAA Exam Retake fee, which cannot be taken within the same testing window.
- Only one exam retake is allowed within the exam eligibility period, which is one year from the date the candidate's initial application was approved.
- The CFAA Exam may be attempted only twice within a 12-month period.
- The Recertification fee applies to CFAA holders who renew the designation before the holder's three-year CFAA designation period expires.
- If a CFAA becomes inactive, the Recertification fee would not be required; instead the Inactive Status fee and Reactivation fees will apply.
- The candidate must start the application process over again if the CFAA Exam is not taken within the candidate's one-year exam eligibility period, or if the candidate does not pass the retake exam, or if the CFAA holder does not recertify or is not placed on Inactive Status before the three-year CFAA designation period expires.
- Fees are subject to change.

CFAA Program Fees Effective February 2019

Fee Type	Fee
Application	\$50
CFAA Exam	\$375
CFAA Exam Retake	\$275
Recertification	\$300
Inactive Status	\$250
Reactivation	\$150

Appendix B: Recertification Point System Summary Table

CFAA Recertification Point System	
<i>A minimum of 60 Recertification Points (RPs) must be earned within the recertification period, unless candidate is approved for inactive status. Candidate must be prepared to submit documentation to validate qualifying recertification points.</i>	
Financial Aid Related Training	
Credential Earned (during the re-certification period)	10/credential
Institute/Bootcamp (Federal/State/Regional/Industry week-long immersive training)	10/event
Fundamentals of Student Financial Aid Administration (FSA)	10/event
NASFAA U Online Courses (successful completion required)	4/course
NASFAA Authorized Event Workshop (independent of an Institute/Bootcamp)	3/topic
Attendance at a Pre-Conference Workshop at National, State, or Regional Association Conferences	3/event
FSA Coach - Online Self-Paced Tutorials	2/tutorial
Financial Aid Training or Policy Webinars (FSA/NASFAA/Regions/States)	1/webinar
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Attendance at Professional Conferences	
Federal Student Aid (FSA) Training Conference	10/conference
NASFAA National Conference (in-person or NASFAA Live)	10/conference
NASFAA Leadership and Legislative Conference	8/conference
Professional Management Training (multi-day intensive leadership/management course or event)*	7/event
Regional Association Annual Conference	6/conference
College Board Annual Forum	6/forum
NACUBO (National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers) National Conference	6/conference
AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) National Conference	6/conference
NACAC (National Association of College Admissions Counseling) National Conference	6/conference
NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) National Conference	6/conference
AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) National Conference	6/conference
APC (Association of Proprietary Colleges) Innovation Summit	6/summit
Regional Leadership/Management Training	5/event
State Association Annual or Bi-Annual Conference	4/conference
College Board Colloquium	4/colloquium
NACUBO Student Financial Services Conference	4/conference
Higher Education Financial Wellness Summit	3/summit
State/Regional Association Single-Day Conference/Training	2/event
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies

Advanced Degree(s) and Coursework	
Doctorate degree in a financial aid related discipline (for example, Higher Education Administration)	40/degree conferred
Master's degree in a financial aid related discipline (for example, Higher Education Administration)	20/degree conferred
Post-baccalaureate course in a financial aid related discipline (successful completion required)	3/course
Obtain financial aid related certificates and certifications	Varies
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Leadership, Engagement and Recognition	
Elected leadership service at national level	15/position/year
Elected leadership service at the state/regional level	10/position/year
Committee or Task force appointment at the national level	4/position/year
Committee or Task force appointment at the state/regional level	3/position/year
Awards or personal recognition given to individual	5/award
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Speaking and Instruction	
Instruction at Institute/Bootcamp	15/event
Instruction at a NASFAA Authorized Event Workshop	5/topic
Instruction at Pre-Conference Workshop	5/event
Conference presentation at national, state, or regional level	2/presentation
Webinar training presentation	2/presentation
NASFAA U Online Course Adjunct	6/course
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Authorship	
Author a peer-reviewed article on a financial aid related topic that is published	3/article
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Advocacy	
Visit with federal legislators and policymakers	3/visit
Visit with regional and/or state legislators and policymakers	2/visit
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies

* Examples of Professional Management Training: ATD (Association for Talent Development), Harvard Business Review, College/University Leadership Symposium, Disney Institute Leadership and Business Training, etc.

Appendix C: Required Documentation for Recertification Points Summary Table

Financial Aid Related Training	
Credential Earned (during the re-certification period)	Results Tracked in iMIS
Institute/Bootcamp (Federal/State/Regional/Industry week-long immersive training)	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Fundamentals of Student Financial Aid Administration (FSA)	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NASFAA U Online Courses (successful completion required)	Results Tracked in iMIS
NASFAA Authorized Event Workshop (independent of an Institute/Bootcamp)	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Attendance at a Pre-Conference Workshop at National, State, or Regional Association Conferences	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
FSA Coach - Online Self-Paced Tutorials	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Financial Aid Training or Policy Webinars (FSA/NASFAA/Regions/States)	Webinar Registration and Certificate of Attendance (if available)
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Attendance at Professional Conferences	
Federal Student Aid (FSA) Training Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NASFAA National Conference (in-person or NASFAA Live)	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NASFAA Leadership and Legislative Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Professional Management Training (multi-day intensive leadership/management course or event)*	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Regional Association Annual Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
College Board Annual Forum	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NACUBO (National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers) National Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) National Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NACAC (National Association of College Admissions Counseling) National Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) National Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) National Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
APC (Association of Proprietary Colleges) Innovation Summit	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Regional Leadership/Management Training	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
State Association Annual or Bi-Annual Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
College Board Colloquium	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
NACUBO Student Financial Services Conference	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Higher Education Financial Wellness Summit	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
State/Regional Association Single-Day Conference/Training	Registration Confirmation/Event Program
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies

Advanced Degree(s) and Coursework	
Doctorate degree in a financial aid related discipline (for example, Higher Education Administration)	Transcript (official or unofficial), copy of diploma
Master's degree in a financial aid related discipline (for example, Higher Education Administration)	Transcript (official or unofficial), copy of diploma
Post-baccalaureate course in a financial aid related discipline (successful completion required)	Transcript (official or unofficial),
Obtain financial aid related certificates and certifications	Transcript (official or unofficial)
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Leadership, Engagement and Recognition	
Elected leadership service at national level	Proof of service from an official source*
Elected leadership service at the state/regional level	Proof of service from an official source*
Committee or Task force appointment at the national level	Proof of appointment from an official source*
Committee or Task force appointment at the state/regional level	Proof of appointment from an official source*
Awards or personal recognition given to individual	Upload Image of Award
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Speaking and Instruction	
Instruction at Institute/Bootcamp	Proof of instruction from an official source*
Instruction at a NASFAA Authorized Event Workshop	Proof of instruction from an official source*
Instruction at Pre-Conference Workshop	Proof of instruction from an official source*
Conference presentation at national, state, or regional level	Proof of presentation from an official source, including session description*
Webinar training presentation	Proof of presentation from an official source, including session description*
NASFAA U Online Course Adjunct	Signed contract with NASFAA
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Authorship	
Author a peer-reviewed article on a financial aid related topic that is published	Copy of published article
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies
Advocacy	
Visit with federal legislators and policymakers	Proof of visit from an official source*
Visit with regional and/or state legislators and policymakers	Proof of visit from an official source*
Other - Subject to CFAA Commission review and approval (refer to Policy #21)	Varies

* Examples include: Public announcements, copies of emails, screenshots of webpages, letter from association/committee/task force representative, etc.

Appendix D: NASFAA TESTING CENTER HOW-TO-GUIDE

Scheduling the CFAA Exam

Login to the testing center: credential.nasfaa.org and click “Book” next to the CFAA Exam.

The screenshot shows the NASFAA U Testing Center interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the NASFAA logo and the text 'NASFAA U Testing Center'. Below the header, there are navigation links for 'Assessments' and 'Logout'. The main content area is titled 'Assessments' and contains a welcome message and a list of instructions. Below the instructions, there is a section for 'Available Assessments' with two rows: 'CFAA Exam' (1 use remaining) and 'Platform Tutorial' (Unlimited uses). The 'Book >' button for the CFAA Exam is circled in red. At the bottom left, there is a logo for 'PROUD MEMBER Institute for Credentialing Excellence'.

Select the “**Remote Proctoring**” tab and select a time zone. If you are testing in the United States, please select the major city that is listed in your time zone:

- Hawaii-Aleutian Time: Honolulu, United States
- Alaska Time: Anchorage, United States
- Pacific Time: Los Angeles, United States
- Mountain Time: Boise (Idaho), United States
- Central Time: Chicago, United States
- Eastern Time: New York OR Detroit, United States

The dates that are grayed out are not available to schedule the CFAA Exam. Select one of the eligible dates during your desired testing window, and then select the time you'd like to take the test.

On the testing day, connecting to your proctor can take up to a half hour, so please plan to have at least two and a half hours available to complete your exam.

The two hours provided for the CFAA Exam does NOT include the time it takes to connect with the proctor.

New Booking

Location **Remote Proctoring**

Select a time zone:
(-04:00) New York

April 2019 May 2019 June 2019

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3	4							1
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30						

Select a time:

Taking the CFAA Exam

Platform Tutorial: Prior to taking the CFAA Exam, acquaint yourself with the [testing platform](#) by completing the Platform Tutorial, which highlights features of the testing center including:

- Zooming/magnifying images and tables
- Bookmarking items
- Taking notes in the notepad

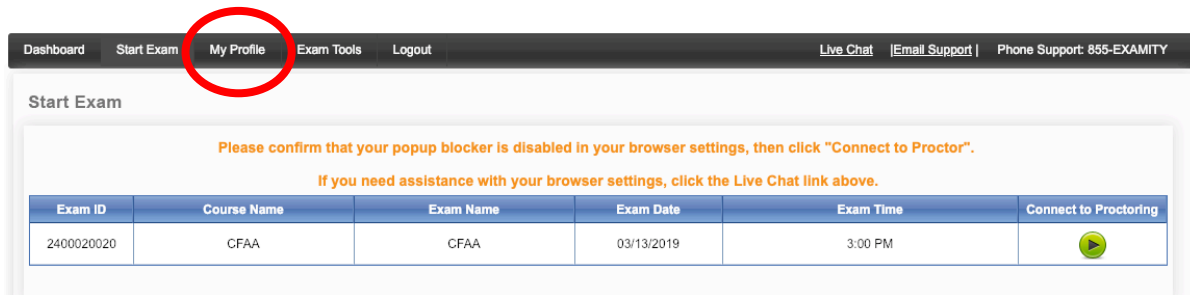
Available Assessments

CFAA Exam	Book »
1 use remaining	
Platform Tutorial	Write assessment »
Unlimited uses	Anytime

Testing Requirements: To take the CFAA Exam, you must meet the testing requirements, which are outlined on this website: https://www.nasfaa.org/cfaa_testing_requirements.

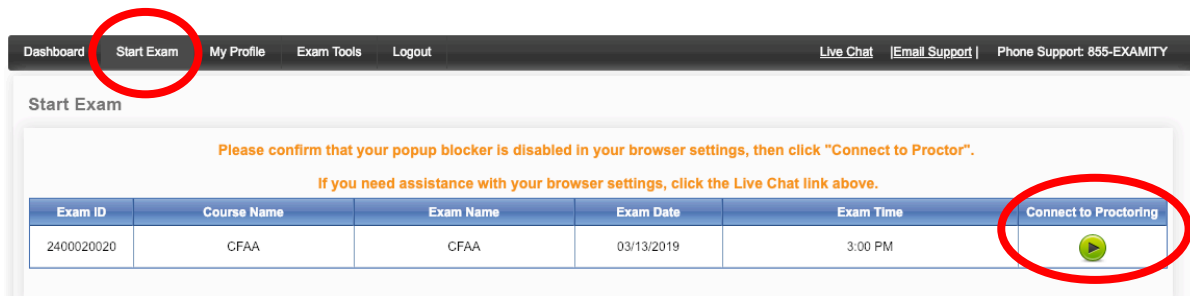
Launching the Exam: You may [launch](#) your exam at your scheduled start time. Your 2-hour exam window will NOT start until you have successfully connected with your proctor and passed all of the testing requirements.

When you launch the CFAA Exam, you must update your profile before you can connect with your proctor. Navigate to the My Profile page and update your phone number. If you become disconnected from your remote proctor during the exam, they will attempt to contact you by phone to try to resolve the problem.



After updating your profile, navigate to the "Start Exam" tab and click the green button under "Connect to Proctoring". It may take several minutes to connect to the proctor, so please be patient.

Once connected, the proctor will request to confirm your identity by displaying your valid, *unexpired* government issued photo ID. You will also be asked to visually scan your testing room before starting the exam to ensure your space meets the testing room requirements.



Once the exam is officially launched, you will have two hours to answer the questions. You may not leave your computer during the exam.

Remember that while taking the exam the following features are available to you:

- Zooming/magnifying images and tables
- Bookmarking items
- Taking notes in the notepad
- Basic, four-function calculator

Live Support

If you have any technical challenges on your Exam Day, you can contact your remote proctor many ways:

- Live Chat feature
- Email Support
- Phone Support – 855-EXAMITY (855-392-6489)

**The National Association of Student
Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
provides professional development
for financial aid administrators;
advocates for public policies that
increase student access and success;
serves as a forum on student financial
aid issues, and is committed to
diversity throughout all activities.**

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

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