

Content Specification Outlines



IMA's Certification for
Accountants and
Financial Professionals
in Business

Effective: September 1, 2024

Institute of Certified Management Accountants

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Content Specification Outlines Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) Examinations

The content specification outlines presented below represent the body of knowledge that will be covered on the CMA examinations. The outlines may be changed in the future when new subject matter becomes part of the common body of knowledge.

Candidates for the CMA designation are required to take and pass Parts 1 and 2.

Candidates are responsible for being informed on the most recent developments in the areas covered in the outlines. This includes understanding of public pronouncements issued by accounting organizations as well as being up-to-date on recent developments reported in current accounting, financial, and business periodicals.

The content specification outlines serve several purposes. The outlines are intended to:

- Establish the foundation from which each examination will be developed.
- Provide a basis for consistent coverage on each examination.
- Communicate to interested parties more detail as to the content of each examination part.
- Assist candidates in their preparation for each examination.
- Provide information to those who offer courses designed to aid candidates in preparing for the examinations.

Important additional information about the content specification outlines and the examinations is listed below.

1. The coverage percentage given for each major topic within each examination part represents the relative weight given to that topic in an examination part. The number of questions presented in each major topic area approximates this percentage.
2. Each examination will sample from the subject areas contained within each major topic area to meet the relative weight specifications. No relative weights have been assigned to the subject areas within each major topic. No inference should be made from the order in which the subject areas are listed or from the number of subject areas as to the relative weight or importance of any of the subjects.

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3. Each major topic within each examination part has been assigned a coverage level designating the depth and breadth of topic coverage, ranging from an introductory knowledge of a subject area (Level A) to a thorough understanding of and ability to apply the essentials of a subject area (Level C). Detailed explanations of the coverage levels and the skills expected of candidates are presented below.
4. The topics for Parts 1 and 2 have been selected to minimize the overlapping of subject areas among the examination parts. The topics within an examination part and the subject areas within the topics may be combined in individual questions.
5. With regard to U.S. federal income taxation issues, candidates will be expected to understand the impact of income taxes when reporting and analyzing financial results. In addition, the tax code provisions that impact decisions (e.g., depreciation, interest, etc.) will be tested.
6. Candidates for the CMA designation are assumed to have knowledge of the following: preparation of financial statements, business economics, time value of money concepts, statistics, and probability.
7. Parts 1 and 2 are four-hour exams and each contains 100 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions. Candidates will have three hours to complete the multiple-choice questions and one hour to complete the essay section. A small number of the multiple-choice questions on each exam are being validated for future use and will not count in the final score.
8. For the essay questions, both written and quantitative responses will be required. Candidates will be expected to present written answers that are responsive to the question asked, presented in a logical manner, and demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the subject matter.

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In order to more clearly define the topical knowledge required by a candidate, varying levels of coverage for the treatment of major topics of the content specification outlines have been identified and defined. The cognitive skills that a successful candidate should possess and that should be tested on the examinations can be defined as follows:

Knowledge: Ability to remember previously learned material such as specific facts, criteria, techniques, principles, and procedures (i.e., identify, define, list).

Comprehension: Ability to grasp and interpret the meaning of material (i.e., classify, explain, distinguish between).

Application: Ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations (i.e., demonstrate, predict, solve, modify, relate).

Analysis: Ability to break down material into its component parts so that its organizational structure can be understood; ability to recognize causal relationships, discriminate between behaviors, and identify elements that are relevant to the validation of a judgment (i.e., differentiate, estimate, order).

Synthesis: Ability to put parts together to form a new whole or proposed set of operations; ability to relate ideas and formulate hypotheses (i.e. combine, formulate, revise).

Evaluation: Ability to judge the value of material for a given purpose on the basis of consistency, logical accuracy, and comparison to standards; ability to appraise judgments involved in the selection of a course of action (i.e., criticize, justify, conclude).

The three levels of coverage can be defined as follows:

Level A: Requiring the skill levels of knowledge and comprehension.

Level B: Requiring the skill levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis.

Level C: Requiring all six skill levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The levels of coverage as they apply to each of the major topics of the Content Specification Outlines are shown on the following pages with each topic listing. The levels represent the manner in which topic areas are to be treated and represent ceilings, i.e., a topic area designated as Level C may contain requirements at the “A,” “B,” or “C” level, but a topic designated as Level B will not contain requirements at the “C” level.

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CMA Content Specification Overview

Part 1 ***Financial Planning, Performance, and Analytics***
(4 hours – 100 questions and 2 essay questions)

External Financial Reporting Decisions	15%	Level C
Planning, Budgeting, and Forecasting	20%	Level C
Performance Management	20%	Level C
Cost Management	15%	Level C
Internal Controls	15%	Level C
Technology and Analytics	15%	Level C

Part 2 ***Strategic Financial Management***
(4 hours – 100 questions and 2 essay questions)

Financial Statement Analysis	20%	Level C
Corporate Finance	20%	Level C
Business Decision Analysis	25%	Level C
Enterprise Risk Management	10%	Level C
Capital Investment Decisions	10%	Level C
Professional Ethics	15%	Level C

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**Content Specification Outlines
Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) Examinations**

Part 1 - Financial Planning, Performance, and Analytics

A. External Financial Reporting Decisions (15% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Financial statements*

- a. Balance sheet
- b. Income statement
- c. Statement of changes in equity
- d. Statement of cash flows
- e. Consolidated statements
- f. Integrated reporting

2. *Recognition, measurement, and valuation*

- a. Asset valuation
- b. Valuation of liabilities
- c. Equity transactions
- d. Revenue recognition
- e. Income measurement
- f. Major differences between U.S. GAAP and IFRS

B. Planning, Budgeting, and Forecasting (20% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Strategic planning*

- a. Analysis of external and internal factors affecting strategy
- b. Long-term mission and goals
- c. Alignment of tactics with long-term strategic goals
- d. Strategic planning models and analytical techniques
- e. Characteristics of successful strategic planning process

2. *Budgeting concepts*

- a. Operations and performance goals
- b. Characteristics of a successful budget process
- c. Resource allocation
- d. Other budgeting concepts

3. *Forecasting techniques*

- a. Regression analysis
- b. Learning curve analysis
- c. Expected value

4. *Budgeting methodologies*

- a. Annual business plans (master budgets)
- b. Project budgeting

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- c. Activity-based budgeting
- d. Zero-based budgeting
- e. Continuous (rolling) budgets
- f. Flexible budgeting

5. Annual profit plan and supporting schedules

- a. Operational budgets
- b. Financial budgets
- c. Capital budgets

6. Top-level planning and analysis

- a. Pro forma income
- b. Financial statement projections
- c. Cash flow projections

C. Performance Management (20% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. Cost and variance measures

- a. Comparison of actual to planned results
- b. Use of flexible budgets to analyze performance
- c. Management by exception
- d. Use of standard cost systems
- e. Analysis of variation from standard cost expectations

2. Responsibility centers and reporting segments

- a. Types of responsibility centers
- b. Transfer pricing
- c. Contribution margin
- d. Reporting of organizational segments

3. Performance measures

- a. Product profitability analysis
- b. Business unit profitability analysis
- c. Customer profitability analysis
- d. Return on investment (ROI)
- e. Residual income
- f. Investment base issues
- g. Key performance indicators (KPIs)
- h. Balanced scorecard

D. Cost Management (15% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. Measurement concepts

- a. Types of cost and cost behavior
- b. Actual and normal costs
- c. Standard costs

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- d. Absorption (full) costing
- e. Variable (direct) costing
- f. Joint and by-product costing

2. *Costing systems*

- a. Job order costing
- b. Activity-based costing
- c. Life-cycle costing
- d. Other costing systems

3. *Overhead costs*

- a. Fixed and variable overhead expenses
- b. Corporate vs. departmental overhead
- c. Determination of allocation base
- d. Allocation of service department costs

4. *Supply chain management*

- a. Lean resource management techniques
- b. Enterprise resource planning (ERP)
- c. Capacity management and analysis

5. *Business process improvement*

- a. Value chain analysis
- b. Value-added concepts
- c. Process analysis, redesign, and standardization
- d. Continuous improvement concepts
- e. Benchmarking and best practice analysis
- f. Cost of quality analysis

E. Internal Controls (15% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Governance, risk, and compliance*

- a. Internal control structure and management philosophy
- b. Internal control policies for safeguarding and assurance
- c. Internal control risk
- d. Testing methods for internal controls
- e. Control deficiency remediation
- f. Corporate governance
- g. External audit requirements

2. *System controls and security measures*

- a. General accounting system controls
- b. Application and transaction controls
- c. Technology controls
- d. Backup controls
- e. Business continuity planning

F. Technology and Analytics (15% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Information systems*

- a. Accounting information systems
- b. Enterprise resource planning systems
- c. Enterprise performance management systems

2. *Data governance*

- a. Data policies and procedures
- b. Life cycle of data
- c. Data management
- d. Controls against security breaches

3. *Technology-enabled finance transformation*

- a. System development life cycle
- b. Process automation
- c. Innovative applications

4. *Data analytics*

- a. Business intelligence
- b. Data mining
- c. Types of data analytics
- d. Data visualization

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Part 2 - Strategic Financial Management

A. Financial Statement Analysis (20% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Comparative financial statement analysis*

- a. Common size financial statements
- b. Common base year financial statements
- c. Financial trend analysis

2. *Financial ratios*

- a. Liquidity
- b. Leverage
- c. Activity
- d. Profitability
- e. Market

3. *Profitability analysis*

- a. Income measurement analysis
- b. Revenue analysis
- c. Cost of sales analysis
- d. Expense analysis
- e. Variation analysis

4. *Special issues*

- a. Impact of foreign exchange rate changes on financial statements
- b. Effects of changing prices and inflation
- c. Impact of changes in accounting treatment
- d. Accounting and economic concepts of value and income
- e. Earnings quality

B. Corporate Finance (20% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Financial risk and return*

- a. Calculating return
- b. Types of financial risk
- c. Relationship between risk and return

2. *Long-term financial management*

- a. Term structure of interest rates
- b. Types of financial instruments
- c. Cost of capital
- d. Valuation of financial instruments

3. *Raising capital*

- a. Financial markets
- b. Financial institutions

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- c. Initial and secondary public offerings
- d. Dividend policy and share repurchases
- e. Lease financing
- f. Debt financing

4. *Working capital management*

- a. Net working capital
- b. Cash management
- c. Marketable securities management
- d. Accounts receivable management
- e. Inventory management
- f. Types of short-term credit
- g. Short-term credit management

5. *Corporate restructuring*

- a. Mergers and acquisitions
- b. Other forms of restructuring

6. *International finance*

- a. Fixed, flexible, and floating exchange rates
- b. Managing transaction exposure
- c. Financing international trade

C. Business Decision Analysis (25% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. *Cost/volume/profit analysis*

- a. Breakeven analysis
- b. Profit performance and alternative operating levels
- c. Analysis of multiple products

2. *Marginal analysis*

- a. Sunk costs, opportunity costs, and other related concepts
- b. Marginal costs and marginal revenue
- c. Special orders and pricing
- d. Make vs. buy
- e. Sell or process further
- f. Add or drop a segment
- g. Capacity considerations

3. *Pricing*

- a. Pricing methodologies
- b. Target costing
- c. Price elasticity of demand
- d. Product life-cycle considerations
- e. Market structure considerations

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D. Enterprise Risk Management (10% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. Enterprise risk

- a. Types of risk
- b. Risk identification and assessment
- c. Risk mitigation strategies
- d. Managing risk

E. Capital Investment Decisions (10% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. Capital budgeting process

- a. Stages of capital budgeting
- b. Incremental cash flows
- c. Income tax considerations
- d. Evaluating uncertainty
- e. Discount rates

2. Capital investment analysis methods

- a. Net present value (NPV)
- b. Internal rate of return (IRR)
- c. Payback
- d. Comparison of investment analysis methods
- e. Sensitivity analysis

F. Professional Ethics (15% - Levels A, B, and C)

1. Business ethics

- a. Ethical decision making
- b. Types of business fraud

2. Ethical considerations for management accounting and financial management professionals

- a. The IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice
- b. Fraud triangle
- c. Evaluation and resolution of ethical issues

3. Ethical considerations for the organization

- a. Organizational factors and ethical culture
- b. Ethical leadership
- c. Legal compliance
- d. Responsibility for ethical conduct
- e. Sustainability and social responsibility
- f. Data ethics