CPHQ®

Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality

Domestic Candidate Handbook

V.2026.7

CPHQ®

Table of Contents

Affiliation 4
Accreditation 4
Statement of Nondiscrimination 4
PROGRAM OVERVIEW 5
- Introduction to the CPHQ Program 5
- Examination Services 5
- Objectives of Certification 6
- Definition of the Quality Professional 6
- Certification 7
- Recertification 7
- Eligibility Requirements 8
- About the Examination 8
- Pretest Questions on the Examination 8

THE CPHQ EXAMINATION 9
- Examination Administration 9
- Assessment Center Locations 9
- Holidays 9
- Special Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities 9
- Attestation 10
- Exam Eligibility 10
- Applying for and Scheduling an Examination 11
- Rescheduling an Examination 12
- Requesting Additional Time to Schedule and Take the Exam 12
- Missed Appointments 12
- No Refunds or Transfers 12
- Inclement Weather, Power Failure, or Emergency at an Assessment Center 12

RULES FOR COMPUTERIZED TESTING 13
- Taking the Examination 13
- Identification 13
- Assessment Center Security and Online Security 14
- Personal Belongings 14
- Examination Restrictions 15
- Misconduct 15

Candidate Responsibility 16
Copyrighted Examination Questions 16
System and Equipment Testing 17
Practice Examination 17
Timed Examination 17
Candidate Comments 18
Following the Examination 18
GENERAL INFORMATION 19
Fees 19
Scores Canceled by HQCC or PSI 19
Disciplinary Policy 20
Pass or Fail Score Determination 20
If You Pass the Examination 21
Continuing Education Credit 21
Verification of CPHQ Status 22
If You Fail the Examination 22
Appeals 22
Verification of Scores 22
Preparation for the CPHQ Certification Examination 23
CPHQ EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE 24

It is the candidate's responsibility to read and understand the contents of this handbook before applying for the examination.

This handbook contains current information about the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® (CPHQ) certification examination developed by the Healthcare Quality Certification Commission (HQCC). It is essential that you keep it readily available for reference until you are notified of your performance on the examination. All previous versions of this handbook are null and void.

For address changes, requests for a current candidate handbook, and information about the development and administration of the CPHQ examination, certification program, and recertification, direct correspondence to:

Certification/Recertification
HQCC Headquarters
8600 West Bryn Mawr Ave.
Suite 710 N.
Chicago, IL 60631, USA

For general inquiries and questions about the exam or recertification, contact HQCC by phone at 847.375.4720 , or e-mail info@nahq.org.

Candidates can register for the examination online at nahq.org.

Affiliation

HQCC, previously known as the Healthcare Quality Certification Board (HQCB), is the certifying arm of the not- for-profit National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ), which was formed in 1976 to advance the profession of healthcare quality through the development of a certification program. HQCC establishes policies, procedures, and standards for certification and recertification in the field of healthcare quality. The granting of CPHQ status by HQCC recognizes professional and academic achievement through the individual's participation in this voluntary certification program.

Accreditation

The CPHQ certification program is fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accrediting arm of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), Washington, DC.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

The certification examination is offered to all eligible candidates, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, or disability. Neither NAHQ nor AMP, a PSI business, the examination service provider, discriminates on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduction to the CPHQ Program

The purpose of certification in the healthcare quality field is to promote excellence and professionalism. The program certifies individuals who demonstrate their knowledge and expertise in this field by passing a written examination. The CPHQ designation provides the healthcare employer and the public with the assurance that certified individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in healthcare quality to perform competently.

The high standards of the certification program are ensured by the close working relationships among NAHQ, HQCC, healthcare quality professionals, and testing experts. HQCC adheres to NCCA standards in the development and implementation of its certification program.

The certification program is not designed to determine who is qualified or who shall engage in healthcare quality activities. The goal is to promote excellence and professionalism by documenting individual performance as measured against a predetermined level of knowledge about quality. All CPHQ are expected to comply with NAHQ's code of ethics in spirit and action. A cooperative effort by HQCC, PSI, and practicing healthcare quality professionals has resulted in the definition of tasks significant to the practice of quality. These competencies are included in the certification examination. The examination materials are developed by practicing healthcare quality professionals and HQCC.

Examination Services

NAHQ contracts with PSI to provide examination services in-person and online internationally or outside of the United States and its territories. PSI carefully adheres to industry standards for development of practice-related, criterion-referenced examinations to assess competency and is responsible for administering and scoring the certification exam and reporting examination results. PSI, which serves as NAHQ's online proctor, maintains a privacy policy and terms and conditions of use that candidates will be subject to in completing the exam online. PSI requires candidates to log onto its Remote Proctoring platform to complete the exam while being monitored through your webcam, microphone and through your computer's desktop, which are all accessible to PSI's remote examiner. PSI collects that information for identity verification, conducting the examination, for fraud prevention, security and integrity, and as otherwise required by law. Before registering to take the CPHQ exam with online proctoring, you are encouraged to read PSI's privacy policy and other applicable terms and conditions, which are available on its website.

Questions related to the examination should be referred to

PSI/AMP
CPHQ Examination
18000 W. 105th Street
Olathe, KS 66061-7543

USA 877.714.5686
International 858.875.3688
Email: exam.scheduleDM@psionline.com
home.psiexams.com/

Objectives of Certification

The objectives of the certification program for quality professionals are to

1. Promote professional standards and improve the practice of quality
2. Give special recognition to those professionals who demonstrate an acquired body of knowledge and expertise in the field through successful completion of the examination process
3. Identify acceptable knowledge of the principles and practice of healthcare quality for employers, the public, and members of allied professions
4. Foster continuing competence and maintain the professional standard in healthcare quality through the recertification program.

Definition of the Quality Professional

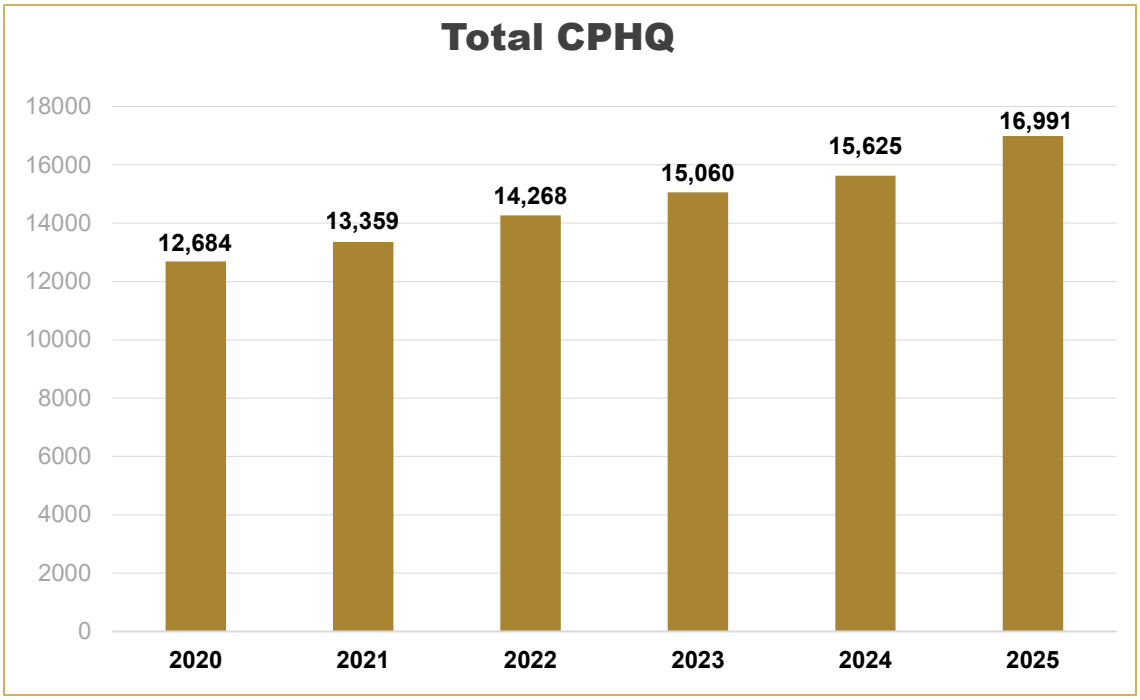
The practice of quality occurs in all healthcare settings, is performed by professionals with diverse clinical and nonclinical educational and experience backgrounds, and involves the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the tasks significant to practice in the CPHQ examination content outline. (Refer to the Examination Content Outline)

A Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ) is

An individual who passed the accredited examination, demonstrating competent knowledge, skill, and understanding of program development and management, quality improvement concepts, coordination of survey processes, communication and education techniques, and departmental management.

HQCC's goal is to produce examinations that test generic concepts that can be applied to any healthcare setting. Candidates who pass the CPHQ examination must also understand how all of these important elements of quality and case/care/disease/utilization/risk management, as well as data and general management skills, integrate to produce an effective and efficient system to monitor and improve care.

CPHQ Statistics



Certification

To become certified, each quality professional must pass the CPHQ examination. The examination is available in computer-based format online, or at assessment centers in the United States and multiple international locations. U.S. candidates are classified as anyone located within the United States (not U.S. territories) and an International candidate is classified as anyone outside of the U.S including U.S territories.

U.S. certificants will receive a digital badge and printable certificate approximately 2 weeks after completing the examination. If you do not receive an email to claim your digital badge, contact info@nahq.org within 1 month of passing the exam. A printed certificate and a CPHQ pin can be purchased at nahq.org.

The credential is valid from the time you receive your digital badge through a 2-year period, which begins on January 1 of the year following the date you pass the examination. Certified professionals are entitled to use the designation “CPHQ” after their names.

Candidates who do not achieve a passing score or whose cycle of eligibility has expired must submit a new application.

Recertification

Following successful completion of the certification examination, the CPHQ is required to maintain certification by fulfilling continuing education (CE) requirements, which are reviewed and established annually by HQCC. The current requirements include:

- Obtaining and maintaining documentation of 30 CEs over the 2-year recertification cycle.
    - CE must be earned during your recertification cycle and cannot be earned during the grace period.

    - CE cannot be earned for activities completed as part of your job-related functions. This includes full-and-part-time employment as well as contract work.
- Current employment in the quality management field is not required to maintain active CPHQ status.
- Payment of a recertification fee.

All CE must relate to areas covered in the most current examination content outline. Current employment in the quality field is not required to maintain active CPHQ status. The process for obtaining recertification can be found in the Recertification Handbook.

Eligibility Requirements

All potential candidates have complete access to the examination process. Those who aspire to demonstrate their competency in the field of healthcare quality have an opportunity to do so and earn certification.

The examination committee develops and writes the examination to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities of effective quality professionals who have been performing tasks on the examination outline for at least 2 years.

Upon submitting your application for the CPHQ exam, you will have 90-days to scheduled and sit for your exam. See the Rescheduling section for more information on how to reschedule your exam.

About the Examination

The CPHQ examination is the only fully accredited examination that standardized measurement of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of competent healthcare quality professionals. The examination is available in a computerized format throughout the year at PSI Test Centers, or online.

The certification examination is an objective, multiple-choice examination consisting of 140 questions. Of these questions, 125 are used in computing the score, as discussed later in this handbook. The following percentage guidelines are used in selecting the three types of questions that appear on each examination: approximately 23% recall, 57% application, and 20% analysis. Recall questions test the candidate's knowledge of specific facts and concepts. Application questions require the candidate to interpret or apply information to a situation. Analysis questions test the candidate's ability to evaluate, problem solve, or integrate a variety of information and judgment into a meaningful whole.

Pretest Questions on the Examination

In addition to the 125 scored questions, CPHQ examinations also include an additional 15 pretest questions. You will be asked to answer these questions; however, they will not be included in the scored examination result. Pretest questions will be dispersed within the examination, and you will not be able to determine which of the questions are being pretested and which will be included in your score. This is necessary to ensure that candidates answer pretest questions in the same manner as they do scored questions. This allows the question to be validated as accurate and appropriate before it is included as a measure of candidate competency.

The examination content is based upon a practice analysis conducted regularly to ensure the content is current, practice-related, and representative of the responsibilities of healthcare

quality professionals. Participants in the practice analysis survey must have completed a

minimum of 1 year working in healthcare quality, case/care/disease/utilization/risk management for their responses to be included in the research.

THE CPHQ EXAMINATION

Examination Administration

Examinations are delivered online or by computer at approximately 300 PSI Test Centers located throughout the United States. The examination is administered by appointment only Monday through Friday. Appointment times may vary by location. Evening and Saturday appointments may be scheduled based on availability. Available dates will be indicated when scheduling your examination. Candidates are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Assessment Center Locations

PSI Test Centers have been selected as CPHQ testing sites to provide accessibility to the most candidates in all states and major metropolitan areas. A current listing of PSI Test Centers may be viewed online here, which displays real-time availability and test center addresses. Test center availability is on a first-come, first-served basis. We cannot guarantee the availability of your preferred test date/time/location will be available when you review this link prior to scheduling.

Holidays

Testing centers will **not** be open on the following U.S. holidays. However, the exam is still accessible online during these holidays:

New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day (and the following Friday), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day

Special Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities

PSI complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and strives to ensure that no individual with a disability—as defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment—is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. PSI will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities. Candidates requesting special accommodations must notify PSI at the time of application and scheduling.

1. Candidates must advise PSI at the time of scheduling that wheelchair access is necessary.
2. Candidates with visual, sensory, physical, or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements and will be reviewed by PSI.

Verification of the disability and a statement of the specific type of assistance needed must be made in writing to PSI at least 45 calendar days prior to your desired examination date by completing this form. PSI will review the submitted forms and will contact you regarding the

decision for accommodations. You can also contact PSI's accommodations department directly at examaccomodations@psionline.com or 1.800.733.9267 ext. 6750.

Attestation

If you choose to apply for the CPHQ Examination, you will be required to attest to the candidate declaration statement. Please take a moment to read the full declaration statement below:

- ✓ I authorize the Healthcare Quality Certification Commission (HQCC)/National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) to make whatever inquiries and investigations that it deems necessary to verify my credentials and professional standing.
- ✓ If I successfully pass the examination and attain the CPHQ designation, I authorize the HQCC/NAHQ to release my name and address to HQCC/NAHQ and affiliated organizations for the purpose of mailing me association information.
- ✓ I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and abide by the code of ethics of my professional practice.
- ✓ I understand that false information may be cause for denial or loss of the credential. I understand that I can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination or from receiving examination scores if the HQCC/NAHQ determines through either proctor observation or statistical analysis that I engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other prohibited behavior during the administration of the examination.
- ✓ I understand that all examination questions are the copyrighted property of NAHQ. I will not reproduce, record, distribute, or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. This includes posting exam questions to social media or other networking sites/ internet sites. I understand that doing so may subject me to severe civil and criminal penalties and jeopardize my credential or my opportunity to take the examination.
- ✓ I understand that I will be recorded by video and audio during my examination with NAHQs test partner, PSI.
- ✓ I understand that the initial certification period is two calendar years following successfully passing the examination and agree to meet current requirements if I wish to maintain active certification status thereafter. I further understand that the HQCC/NAHQ has the authority to change requirements to attain and maintain certification from time to time.
- ✓ I agree that the exam is non-refundable and that I have 90 days/1 testing window to take the exam.
- ✓ I have read and understand the information provided in the applicable Candidate Handbook. I declare that the foregoing statements are true.

Exam Eligibility

After submitting your application and completing payment, you will have 90-days to schedule and take your CPHQ exam. No additional time will be provided, however there are some circumstances where you may request additional time. Please review the section "Requesting Additional Time to Take the Exam" for further information.

Applying for and Scheduling an Examination

1. Apply and Pay for Exam

Apply for the exam by Credit Card:

1. You may complete the application process online by visiting nahq.org.
2. Select **Login**
3. Sign in with your e-mail address and password or, if you are a new customer, create an account.
4. In the navigation panel on the left, select **My Certification** and then follow guided instructions to complete the application process.
5. Complete payment for the CPHQ exam. NAHQ accepts VISA, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover.
    a. Once you have submitted payment, you will have 90-days to schedule and take your exam

Apply for the exam by Check:

1. If you are paying by check, you will need to fill out the application form.
2. Mail the application form and your check for appropriate fees to HQCC/NAHQ. Please note that there is an additional $25 fee for payment by check.
3. Once the application and payment is received, you will receive an order confirmation email from NAHQ. If there are any there are any issues processing your application or payment, NAHQ will reach out to you via email or phone.
4. At the time your application is processed, you will have 90 days to schedule and take your CPHQ exam.

All fees are nonrefundable and nontransferable.

2. Schedule Exam

After your application and payment have been received, you can schedule your exam directly within your NAHQ account. You will be required to schedule and sit for your exam within 90 days of payment. To schedule your exam, please complete the following steps:

a. Visit nahq.org
b. Login to your NAHQ account and in the navigation panel on the left, select **My Certification** and then **Go to Test Portal**
c. A new tab will open, and you can begin scheduling your exam by selecting Available Tests in the Overview tab. This tab will display information to begin scheduling your exam.

If you prefer to schedule your exam by phone, please contact PSI at 877.714.5686. When you schedule your examination appointment, be prepared to confirm a location and preferred date and time for testing. You will be asked to provide your unique identification number.

After you've scheduled your examination, you will be notified of the time to report to the assessment center and if an e-mail address is provided you will be sent an e-mail confirmation notice.

If special accommodations are being requested, complete the Request for Special Examination Accommodations form included in this handbook and submit it to PSI at least 45 days prior to the desired examination date.

Rescheduling an Examination

You may reschedule your exam date/time as many times as you would like within your eligibility window. You can reschedule your exam online by logging into your NAHQ account or calling PSI at 877.714.5686. The exam must be rescheduled at least 48 hours in advance of your exam date.

Requesting Additional Time to Schedule and Take the Exam

The circumstances where an extension may be requested, are due to the following:

- Within the last 30-days are impacted by a natural disaster
- Within the last 30-days experienced a major life-event (death in the family, unplanned surgery, etc.)

In order to be considered for additional time to take your exam, your request must be received within your exam eligibility timeframe. If you fit within one of the criteria's above, you may request a maximum 90-day extension using this form. You must complete this form at least 5 business days before your scheduled exam and/or before your exam eligibility expires. If you do not submit this form within the designated timeframe, your request will be denied. Submitting an extension request form can only be submitted ONCE per paid application.
All fees are nonrefundable and nontransferable.

Missed Appointments

You will forfeit your examination registration and all fees paid to take the examination under the following circumstances:

- You cancel your examination after confirmation of eligibility is received.
- You do not secure a testing date/time before your eligibility expires.
- You wish to reschedule an examination but fail to contact PSI at least 2 business days prior to the scheduled testing session.
- You appear more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- You fail to report for an examination appointment.

A new, complete application and examination fee are required to reapply for the examination.

No Refunds or Transfers

Fees are nonrefundable and nontransferable. Declined credit cards will be subject to a $25 handling fee. A certified check or money order for the amount due, including the handling fee, must be sent to HQCC/NAHQ to cover declined credit card transactions.

Inclement Weather, Power Failure, or Emergency at an Assessment Center

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination at the assessment center, PSI will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation, and subsequent rescheduling, of an examination. The examination will usually not be rescheduled if the assessment center personnel are able to open the assessment center.

Visit PSI's website at https://home.psiexams.com/ prior to the examination to determine if PSI has been advised that any assessment centers are closed. Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled at an assessment center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification following the examination regarding rescheduling or reapplication procedures.

If power to an assessment center is temporarily interrupted during an administration, your examination will be restarted. The responses provided up to the point of interruption will be intact, but for security reasons the questions will be scrambled.

RULES FOR COMPUTERIZED TESTING

Taking the Examination

Examination rules are the same regardless of what format you are taking the exam in. All of the information below applies, expect where it indicates the difference of online vs in person. Candidates must listen and adhere to the proctor's instructions throughout their examination.

In Person

Your examination will be given by computer at a PSI assessment center. You do not need any computer experience or typing skills to take your examination. On the day of your examination appointment, report to the assessment center no later than your scheduled testing time. Look for signs indicating PSI assessment center check-in. **If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, you will not be admitted.**

Online

Your examination will be taken on your personal computer with one monitor that has both a webcam and microphone capabilities. It is required to test your computer system's compatibility prior to your examination date using this link. This compatibility link is NOT what is used on test day, PSI will run another system test to ensure that there are no background apps running, you can test this process when you schedule your exam. If your computer is not compatible to download the testing platform and you are not admitted to your exam you may be subject to a rescheduling fee. In addition, you are required to use a computer that you have administrator rights to. Oftentimes, individuals do not have administration rights to employer-issued computers and therefore, should not be used.

On the day of your examination appointment, you should launch your exam at least 30 minutes before your scheduled exam time, or no later than your scheduled testing time. You can launch your exam by going to your NAHQ account then Test Portal and launch from within there. **If you arrive after your scheduled testing time, you may not be admitted.**

Identification

To gain admission to the assessment center or begin your exam online, you must present two physical forms of identification, one with a current photograph. Both forms of identification must be valid and include your current name and signature. No forms of temporary identification or digital identification will be accepted. You will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity. You MUST bring one of the following:

- driver's license with photograph
- state identification card with photograph
- passport
- military identification card with photograph

The second form of identification must display your name and signature for signature verification (e.g., credit card with signature, social security card with signature, employment or student ID

card with signature). If your name on these documents is different than it appears on your identification, you must bring proof of your name change (e.g., marriage license, divorce decree, or court order).

You submit your legal name at the time of your application for the CPHQ exam. If you do not submit your correct legal name on your application, you may contact NAHQ to request a name change by completing **this form** at least 5 days before your scheduled exam. If you do not submit this request at least 5 days prior to your scheduled exam, you may be subject to a name change fee.

Assessment Center Security and Online Security

PSI administration and security standards are designed to ensure all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The assessment center, and online proctoring, is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- Examinations are proprietary. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, or cellular phones are allowed in the testing room or while testing online. Possession of a cellular phone or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.
- Although calculators are not necessary for the examination, one is provided within the testing platform. You are NOT permitted to bring a personal calculator and use it during the examination.
- No guests, visitors, or family members are allowed in the testing room, reception areas or should be visible while taking the examination online.
- Candidates may be subjected to a metal detection scan upon entering the examination room.

Personal Belongings

In Person

No personal items, valuables, or weapons should be brought to the assessment center. Only wallets and keys are permitted. Coats must be left outside the testing room. You will be provided a soft locker to store your wallet and/or keys with you in the testing room. You will not have access to these items until after the examination is completed. Please note the following items will not be allowed in the testing room except securely locked in the soft locker:

- watches
- hats

Once you have placed everything into the soft locker, you will be asked to pull out your pockets to ensure they are empty. If all personal items will not fit in the soft locker you will not be able to test. The site will not store any personal belongings.

If any personal items are observed in the testing room after the examination is started, the administration will be forfeited.

Online

No personal items should be observed while taking the examination online. Please be sure your workplace is free of any and all personal belongings. **A clear glass with water is permitted**

while taking the examination.

If any personal items are observed before or after the examination has started, the administration will be forfeited, and you will lose your examination testing fees. Examples of personal items are, but not limited to, the following:

- cell phone
- paper of any kind, including sticky notes
- food
- drink coaster
- headphones/earbuds
- eyewear case
- plant
- laptop stand
- additional computer monitor(s)
- books and/or magazines

Examination Restrictions

In Person

- No documents or notes of any kind may be used during the examination
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- Eating, drinking, or smoking will not be permitted in the assessment center
- You may take a break whenever you wish, but you will not be allowed additional time to make up for time lost during breaks.

Online

- No documents or notes of any kind may be used during the examination.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- While testing online, you will not be permitted a break. If you wish to schedule a break, you will need to complete an accommodation form at the end of this handbook and submit to PSI. If your accommodation is approved, during your examination you will not be allowed review any previous questions you answered prior to the break.
- Eating, smoking or chewing gum will not be permitted while taking your examination online. Doing so may result in your exam being terminated.
- You may have one (1) clear glass of water to show the proctor before starting the examination.
- While testing online, you are not permitted to read the questions and answers out loud. This includes mouthing the question. Doing so may result in your exam being terminated.

Misconduct

If you engage in any of the following conduct during the examination you may be dismissed, your scores will not be reported, and examination fees will not be refunded. ***Examples*** of misconduct are when you

- create a disturbance, are abusive, or otherwise uncooperative
- display or use electronic communications equipment such as cellular phones
- talk or participate in conversation with other examination candidates

- using instant messenger tool, talking or participate in conversation with someone while taking the exam online
- give or receive help or are suspected of doing so
- leave the assessment center during the administration
- leave the webcam while taking the exam online
- using another computer or computer monitor while testing online
- attempt to record examination questions or make notes
- attempt to take the examination for someone else
- are observed with personal belongings
- are observed with notes, books, or other aids without it being noted on the roster
- failure to comply with proctor requests
- while testing online, browsing other websites during/throughout exam
- do not adhere to proctor instructions
- taking exam online in a noisy environment, public location or dark room

Candidate Responsibility

As a CPHQ candidate, it is your responsibility and duty to report suspicious or inappropriate activity both inside and outside of the testing center. Suspicious activity includes, **but is not limited to:**

- the dissemination of exam questions or other copyrighted works either in the testing center, electronically, or through other channels (including the memorization and subsequent distribution of items)
- attempting to steal content from the testing center
- sharing information or answers to the exam at the testing site, electronically, or through other channels
- obtaining the questions in advance of the examination
- providing the questions to other candidates in advance of the examination
- taking, or trying to take, an exam for someone else
- allowing someone to take an exam on your behalf
- taking unauthorized notes or study aids into the examination
- using your cell phone or other devices to store or receive information and referring to this information during the examination
- conferring with candidates during the examination
- allowing another candidate to look at your exam
- attempting to cheat on the exam in any other way

Alerting NAHQ and HQCC of this activity protects the integrity of the credential you have worked hard to achieve. Breaches of copyright and conduct impact the value that the CPHQ holds, and it is your responsibility to report such breaches to maintain the high standards of the credential. Exam content is the copyrighted work of NAHQ, and breach of copyright is illegal and punishable by law.

Report all incidents of breach of conduct to **NAHQ** by mail at 8600 West Bryn Mawr Ave., Suite 710 N., Chicago, IL 60631, USA, by email at info@nahq.org, or call 847.375.4720.

Copyrighted Examination Questions

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of NAHQ. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. This includes posting exam questions to social media or other

networking sites/ internet sites. This constitutes a test security and copyright violation. Doing so may subject the candidate to severe civil and criminal penalties and jeopardize your credential. See *Disciplinary Policy* for the full disciplinary policy.

System and Equipment Testing

In Person

Prior to attempting the timed examination, you will be given the opportunity to practice taking an examination on the computer. The time used for this practice examination is NOT counted as part of the examination time or score. When you are comfortable with the computer testing process, you may quit the practice session and begin the timed examination.

Online

It is required to test your computer system's compatibility prior to your examination date using this link. If your computer is not compatible to download the testing platform and you are not admitted to your exam you may be subject to a rescheduling fee.

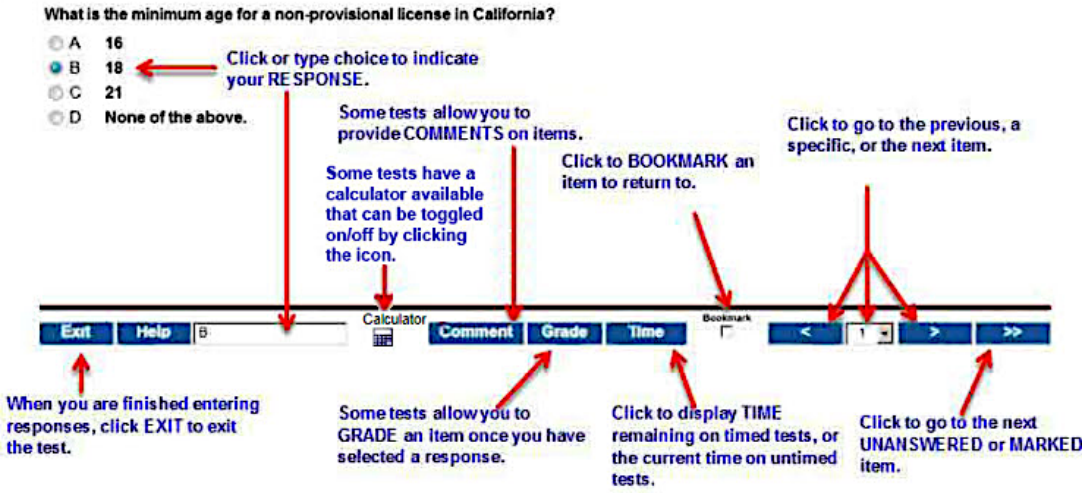
For an updated list of the technical requirements, please visit this webpage.

Practice Examination

Prior to attempting the timed examination, you will be given the opportunity to practice taking an examination on the computer. The time used for this practice examination is NOT counted as part of the examination time or score. When you are comfortable with the computer testing process, you may quit the practice session and begin the timed examination.

Timed Examination

Following the practice examination, the actual examination will begin. Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on-screen.



The computer monitors the time spent on the examination. You will have 3 hours to complete the examination. The examination will terminate if testing exceeds the time allowed. Click on the "Time" box in the lower right portion of the screen to monitor testing time. A digital clock indicates the time remaining to complete the examination. The time feature may be turned off during the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the lower right portion of the screen. Choices of answers to the examination questions are identified as A, B, C, or D. You must indicate your choice by either typing in the letter in the response box in the lower left portion of the computer screen or clicking on the option using the mouse. To change an answer, enter a different option by typing A, B, C, or D or by clicking on the option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish during the examination, within the time limit.

To move to the next question, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right portion of the screen. This action will move you forward through the examination question by question. To review any question, click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow key to move backward through the examination.

An examination question may be left unanswered for return later in the examination session*. Questions may also be bookmarked for later review by using the mouse and clicking in the blank square to the right of the “Time” box. Click on the double arrow (>>) to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the examination. To identify all unanswered and bookmarked questions, repeatedly click on the double arrow (>>). When the examination is completed, the number of examination questions answered is reported. If not all questions have been answered and there is time remaining, return to the examination and answer those questions. Be sure to provide an answer for each examination question before ending the examination. There is no penalty for guessing.

**if you do not have an accommodation while testing online to have a scheduled break*

Candidate Comments

During the examination, comments may be provided for any question by clicking on the button displaying an exclamation point (!) to the left of the “Time” box. This opens a dialogue box where comments may be entered. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

Following the Examination

After you finish the examination, you are asked to complete a short evaluation of your testing experience. When taking the examination online or at an exam assessment center, score reports will be provided on the screen following your exam, and digitally in your account. Neither HQCC nor the testing agency will release a copy of individual score reports to employers, schools, or other individuals or organizations without your written authorization.

The score report you receive will include your photograph, taken prior to the start of the examination. This is an unofficial score report. You may not use the CPHQ credential until you receive your official CPHQ digital badge from NAHQ. The score report will reflect either “pass” or “fail,” followed by a scaled score indicating the range of questions you answered correctly. Additional detail is provided in the form of percentages of questions answered correctly by each of the seven major content categories. This information is provided as feedback to help you understand your performance within the major content categories. Your pass or fail status is determined by your overall raw score for the entire examination. Even though the examination consists of 140 questions, your score is based on 125 scored questions. Fifteen of the questions on the examination are “pretest” questions and are not included in the final score.

The content category scores on the score report are not used to determine pass-fail decision

outcomes. They are only provided to offer a general indication regarding your performance in each content category. The examination is designed to provide a consistent and precise determination of your overall performance and is not designed to provide complete information regarding your performance in each content category. You should remember that areas with a larger number of items (questions) will affect the overall score more than areas with a fewer number of items. The precision and consistency of scores diminishes with fewer items, and therefore, sub-scores should be interpreted with caution, especially those that correspond to content categories with very few items.

Failing candidates may reapply for subsequent examinations. Candidates may reapply for subsequent examinations 14 days after your initial exam date. Candidates may not test more than three times in 365 days. If a candidate fails to pass the exam after three attempts in 365 days, he or she must wait 365 days from time of the third attempt to reapply for the exam again. For more information regarding failing the examination, see *If You Fail the Examination*.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Fees

Fees for the CPHQ examination are shown in the table that follows:

CPHQ DOMESTIC EXAM FEES IN USD		
Member Type:	**Online by credit card**	**By mail via check***
Standard and CPHQ Members	$500	$525
Premium Members	$357	$382
Nonmembers	$714	$739

*Though candidates must apply for certification online, payment can be sent by via a check in the mail with the completed printed application. An additional $25 fee must be included if payment is submitted in any way other than online. Please address any check payment to:

HQCC/NAHQ
8600 West Bryn Mawr Ave., Suite 710N
Chicago, IL 60631, USA

If you wish to become a member of NAHQ, contact NAHQ at 847.375.4720 or visit nahq.org.

Exam fees may be paid by credit card, personal check, or money order for the total amount, payable to HQCC/NAHQ. Please write the name of the candidate taking the exam on the face of your check. An additional $25 charge will be added for any returned checks or rejected credit cards to cover additional handling fees and service charges imposed by the bank or Credit Card Company. Your canceled check or credit card receipt serves to document payment for the examination.

Scores Canceled by HQCC or PSI

HQCC and PSI are responsible for the integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as technical malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. HQCC and PSI are committed to rectifying such discrepancies as expeditiously as possible. Examination results may be voided if, upon investigation, violation of regulations is discovered.

Disciplinary Policy

HQCC grants the CPHQ certification to qualified healthcare quality professionals as a means of promoting excellence and professionalism in the healthcare quality field. The Certification program is a voluntary process. The Commission, in accordance with its policies and procedures, determines whether individuals are qualified for Certification, and issues said Certification when applicable. The Commission does not determine, monitor, or otherwise become involved in the manner employers and other third parties apply the Certification.

Applications for initial Certification or renewal of the same are determined by HQCC at its sole discretion. Without limiting the foregoing, applications may be refused, candidates may be barred from future examinations, or candidates or individuals already Certified may be sanctioned, including revocation of the Certification, for, but not limited to, the following conduct ("Improper Conduct"):

- Including and/or otherwise providing false, misleading, or incomplete information on any application for Certification or renewal, or other CPHQ related document.
- Failing to complete or provide proof of completion of the any Certification or renewal requirements.
- Commissions' determination that Certification or renewal was improperly granted.
- Cheating or assisting others to cheat on any CPHQ exam.
- Purchasing, sharing, and/or reviewing preparatory materials that have, or claim to have, actual questions, answers, or other materials from prior CPHQ exams.
- Removing or attempting to remove examination materials or information from a test site or live remote proctored examination.
- Unauthorized possession or distribution of any official testing or examination materials via social media sites, text messaging, or other medium, and/or reproduced in any format.
- Causing, creating, or participating in an examination irregularity.
- Assisting others to wrongfully obtain Certification or renew their Certification.
- Failure to comply with the code of ethics in which Certification is held.
- Any conduct unbecoming of the healthcare quality profession and/or failure to comply with HQCC's policies and procedures regarding Certification.

The definitions of any and all terms *(e.g., misleading, incomplete, cheating, irregularity, unbecoming, spirit, and action, etc.)* included in the above example violations shall be determined by the Commission in its sole discretion and are not subject to other interpretation. All CPHQs must read and agree to abide by HQCC's Disciplinary Policies and Procedures prior to sitting to the exam.

Pass or Fail Score Determination

Neither HQCC nor PSI is able to release or discuss individual questions with candidates following the examination. To do so would require elimination of that question from the item bank of pretested questions and deplete the number of pretested questions required to develop future versions of the examination.

The CPHQ exam is scored on a scale of **200 to 800, with 600 being the passing score**.

The methodology used to set the minimum passing score is the Angoff method, applied during the performance of a Passing Point Study by a panel of experts in the field. The experts evaluated each question on the examination to determine how many correct answers are necessary to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to pass this examination portion. Your ability to pass the examination depends on the knowledge and skill you display, not on the performance of other candidates.

Passing scores may vary slightly for each version of the examination. To ensure fairness to all candidates, a process of statistical equating is used. This involves selecting an appropriate mix of individual questions for each version of the examination that meet the content distribution requirements of the examination content blueprint. Because each question has been pretested, a difficulty level can be assigned. The process then considers the difficulty level of each question selected for each version of the examination, attempting to match the difficulty level of each version as closely as possible. To ensure fairness, slight variations in difficulty level are addressed by adjusting the passing score up or down, depending on the overall difficulty level statistics for the group of scored questions that appear on a particular version of the examination.

For more information on scaled scoring and how it is applied to the CPHQ exam, please visit this webpage. The pass rate amongst US-based candidates in 2025 was 72%. This is reflective of the amount of people who passed the exam, NOT the passing score (i.e., the minimum score needed to pass the exam).

If You Pass the Examination

If you pass the CPHQ examination, you will receive by email a copy of your CPHQ digital badge approximately 2 business days after you pass your exam. Your name, as stated on the application, will appear on the digital badge and printable certificate. The CPHQ digital badge will be sent to the primary email address on file. Learn more about the CPHQ digital badge process here.

Certified professionals are entitled to use the designation Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® and acronym “CPHQ” with your name on letterheads, business cards, and all forms of address once you receive your official CPHQ digital badge from HQCC. The credential is valid from the time you receive your digital badge through a 2-year period, which begins on January 1 of the year following the date you pass the examination. Certification is for individuals only. The CPHQ designation may not be used to imply that an organization, association, or private firm is certified.

HQCC reserves the right to recognize publicly any candidate who has successfully completed a CPHQ certification examination, thereby earning the certification credential.

Certificates and CPHQ pins can be requested by completing an online order at nahq.org .

Continuing Education Credit

Some organizations accept successful completion of a certification examination for continuing education (CE) credit. Check with your licensure or registration board or association for acceptance and CE credits allowed.

Refer to the *Recertification* section of this handbook for details about CE requirements to maintain CPHQ status after passing the examination.

Verification of CPHQ Status

Information on the current certification status of an individual can be obtained at nahq.org. Employers who request verification of CPHQ status must provide the individual's name, CPHQ Certification number, and a signature from the candidate to allow the release of candidate's information.

If You Fail the Examination

If you do not pass the certification examination, you may reapply for subsequent examinations 14 days after your initial exam date. You may test three times in 365 days. If a candidate fails to pass the exam after three attempts in 365 days, he or she must wait 365 days from time of the third attempt to sit for the exam again. Repeat candidates must submit a new application and full examination fee. Names of candidates who do not pass the examination are confidential and are not revealed under any circumstances, except by legal compulsory process.

Appeals

Because the performance of each question on the examination that is included in the final score has been pretested, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions, answers, or a failing score.

Actions by the commission affecting eligibility of a candidate to take the examination may be appealed. Additionally, appeals may be considered for alleged inappropriate examination administration procedures or environmental testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process and which could have been avoided.

Appeals may be submitted by e-mail to info@nahq.org or in writing by mail to the attention of the HQCC chair at the address below:
HQCC Headquarters
8600 West Bryn Mawr Ave.
Suite 710 N,
Chicago, IL 60631, USA

Equivalency eligibility appeals must be received within 30 days of the initial HQCC action. Appeals for alleged inappropriate administration procedures or severe adverse environmental testing conditions must be received within 30 days of the examination date.

The HQCC Chair, or NAHQ Staff, will respond within 30 days of receipt of the appeal. If this decision is adverse, the candidate may file a second-level appeal within 30 days. A three-member panel of HQCC will review the chair/staff decision and respond with a final decision within 45 days of receipt.

Verification of Scores

In computer-based testing, the computer accepts responses from a keyboard or mouse in digitized form. Computer- based testing eliminates problems that may have previously arisen with scanning paper-and-pencil answer sheets, because all responses are recorded by candidates during their examinations. However, verification of examination scores from electronic responses can be requested. For more information about the process and fee for this service, contact NAHQ at 847.375.4720 within 30 days after the examination.

Preparation for the CPHQ Certification Examination

HQCC neither sponsors, endorses, nor financially benefits from any review courses or published preparation materials for the CPHQ certification examination. We are aware of organizations that claim to have real exam items; please be aware that it is illegal for them to possess real exam items since the items are the copyrighted property of NAHQ. If an organization or individual does have real exam items these are stolen property of NAHQ and the organization or individual can face severe civil and criminal penalties.

If a candidate is found to be utilizing materials from a company or individual claiming to have real exam items HQCC retains the right to prevent the candidate from testing, revoke their credential and bar from future testing. See the section *Disciplinary Policy* for the full disciplinary policy.

Examination questions are written from a wide variety of publications and resources in the field. Some suggested preparation for the examination might include but should not be limited to the following resources:

1. *HQ Solutions: Resource for the Healthcare Quality Professional* 4th Edition, Luc R. Pelletier & Christy L Beaudin, Eds. (2018)
2. *The Janet A. Brown Healthcare Quality Handbook: A Professional Resource and Study* Guide 29th Edition, Brown, Janet A. and Mellott, Susan (2018)
3. *The Janet A. Brown Healthcare Quality Handbook: A Professional Resource and Study* Guide 30th Edition, Brown, Janet A. and Mellott, Susan (2018)
4. Facilitating with Ease Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Managers, Consultants and Trainers, 4th edition, Ingrid Bens (2018)
5. *Understanding Patient Safety*, 3rd edition, Robert M. Wacther, Kiran Gupta (2018)
6. *Storytelling with Data,* Cole N. Knaflic *(2015)*
7. *The Healthcare Quality Book: Vision, Strategy, and Tools (*3rd ed.) Maulik S Joshi, and Elizabeth R. Ransom (2014)
8. *Essentials of Managed Health Care* 6th edition, Peter R. Kongstvedt (2013)
9. *The Lean Enterprises Memory Jogger*, Richard L. Macinnes & Carolann Scherer (2002)
10. *The Memory Jogger™ 2* 2nd edition, Michael Brassard, (2010)
11. *The Quality Toolbox*, Nancy Tague. (2005)
12. *Facilitating with Ease* 2nd Edition, Ingrid Bens *(2008)*
13. *Preventing Medication Errors*, Institute of Medicine (2007)
14. *Clinical Governance: A Guide to Implementation for Healthcare Professionals* 2nd Edition, Rob McSheerry, Paddy Pearce (2007)
15. *The Certified Manager of Quality/Organizational Excellence Handbook* 3rd Edition, Russell T. Westcott (2006)
16. *Lean Six Sigma Pocket Toolbook*, Michael George, David Rowlans, Mark Price, & John Maxey (2005)
17. *Quality Chasm Series: Patient Safety—Achieving a New Standard for Care, Institute of Medicine*. (2004)
18. *Quality Health Care: A Guide to Understanding Patient Saftey, Third Edition* by Robert Watcher, Kiran Gupta (2017)
19. *Population Health: Principles and Applications for Management 1st edition* by Rosemary Caron (2017)

20. *Developing and Using Indicators*, Robert Lloyd (2004)
21. *The Team Handbook*, 3rd edition, Peter Scholtes, Brian Joiner, & Barbara Streibel. (2004)
22. *The Lean Enterprise Memory Jogger* Create Value and Eliminate Waste Throughout Your Company, Richard L. Macinnes, Carolann Scherer (2002)
23. *The Medical Staff Services Handbook: Fundamentals and Beyond* 2nd Edition, Cindy A. Gassiot, Vicki L. Serarcy, Christina W. Giles
24. *The Six Sigma Way Team Fieldbook*, Peter S. Pande, Robert P. Neuman, Roland R. Cavanagh (2002)
25. *The Six Sigma Memory Jogger II*, Michael Brassard, Lynda Finn, Dana Ginn, Diane Ritter (2002)
26. *Measuring Quality Improvement in Healthcare: A Guide to Statistical Process Control Applications*, Raymond G. Carey, Robert C. Lloyd (2001)
27. *Crossing the Quality Chasm*, Institute of Medicine (2001)
28. *Population Health: A Primer* by Richard Riegelman (2020)
29. *Storytelling with Data:* A Data Visualization Guide for Business Professionals 1st Edition (2015)
30. *Understanding Patient Saftey, Third Edition* by Robert Watcher, Kiran Gupta (2017)
31. *Population health: Principles and Applications for Management 1st edition* by Rosemary Caron (2017)
32. *Institute for Healthcare Improvement:* www.ihi.org/pages/default.aspx
33. *Institute for Safe Medication Practices:* www.ismp.org
34. *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:* www.ahrq.gov

CPHQ EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

The content validity of the CPHQ examination is based on a practice analysis which surveyed healthcare quality professionals on the tasks they perform. Each question on the examination is linked directly to one of the tasks listed on the following pages. In other words, each question is designed to test whether the candidate possesses the knowledge necessary to perform the task or has the ability to apply it to a job situation.

Each of the tasks on the following pages was rated as significant to practice by healthcare quality professionals who responded to the survey. One rule used by the exam committee requires that a task be significant to practice in the major types and sizes of healthcare facilities, including those employed in managed care. Thus, the examination content is valid for this segment of healthcare quality professionals and those employed in hospital, clinic, home care, behavioral and mental health, or other care settings.

The following is a list of tasks that forms the content outline of the CPHQ examination and to which the examination questions are linked.

CPHQ® by NAHQ®

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL IN HEALTHCARE QUALITY® DETAILED CONTENT OUTLINE[1]

1. Quality Leadership and Integration (19 Items)

A. Strategic Planning

1. Advise leadership on organizational improvement opportunities
2. Assist with the development of action plans or projects
3. Assist with establishing priorities
4. Participate in activities that support the quality governance infrastructure
5. Align quality and safety activities with strategic goals

B. Stakeholder Engagement

1. Identify resource needs to improve quality
2. Assess the organization's culture of quality and safety
3. Engage stakeholders to promote quality and safety
4. Provide consultative support to the governing body and key stakeholders regarding their roles and responsibilities related to quality improvement
5. Promote engagement and inter-professional teamwork

2. Performance and Process Improvement (27 Items)

A. Implement quality improvement training

B. Communicate quality improvement information within the organization

C. Identify quality improvement opportunities

D. Establish teams, roles, responsibilities, and scope

E. Participate in activities to identify innovative or evidence-based practices

F. Lead and facilitate change

G. Use performance improvement methods (e.g., Lean, PDSA, Six Sigma)

H. Use quality tools and techniques (e.g., fishbone diagram, FMEA, process map)

I. Participate in monitoring of project timelines and deliverables

J. Evaluate team effectiveness

K. Evaluate the success of performance improvement projects and solutions

1 Approximately 23% of the items will require recall on the part of the candidate, 57% will require application of knowledge, and 20% will require analysis. Each test form will include 15 unscored pretest items in addition to the 125 scored items.. | Last updated: 3/2023

©2024 Healthcare Quality Certification Commission

CPHQ® by NAHQ®

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL IN HEALTHCARE QUALITY® DETAILED CONTENT OUTLINE[1]

3. Population Health and Care Transitions (11 Items)

A. Identify data and resources that are important in determining the health status of defined populations

B. Identify population health management strategies to integrate into improvement initiatives

C. Incorporate prevention, wellness, and disease management solutions into improvement initiatives

D. Incorporate techniques to address health disparities and promote equity into improvement initiatives

E. Analyze and use clinical, cost, equity, and social determinants of health data to drive and monitor improvement efforts

F. Identify opportunities for improvement in care transitions

G. Collaborate with stakeholders to improve and optimize care processes and transitions

H. Incorporate concepts of social determinants of health into improvement activities

4. Health Data Analytics (26 Items)

A. Data Management Systems

1. Assist in evaluating and developing data management systems to support quality improvement
2. Design data collection plans:
   a. Measure development (e.g. definitions, goals, thresholds, numerators, and denominators)
   b. Tools and techniques
   c. Sampling methodology
3. Identify and select measures (e.g. structure, process, outcome, experience)
4. Collect and validate quantitative and qualitative data
5. Identify external data sources for comparison and benchmarking
6. Design scorecards and dashboards for different audiences

B. Measurement and Analysis

1. Use data management systems for organization, analysis, and reporting of data
2. Use data visualization and display techniques
3. Use measurement tools to evaluate process improvement
4. Use statistics to describe data and examine relationships (e.g., measures of central tendency, standard deviation, correlation, regression, t-test)
5. Use statistical process control techniques and tools (e.g., common and special cause variation, control charts, trend analysis)
6. Compare data sources to establish benchmarks
7. Interpret data to support decision-makings

1 Approximately 23% of the items will require recall on the part of the candidate, 57% will require application of knowledge, and 20% will require analysis. Each test form will include 15 unscored pretest items in addition to the 125 scored items.. | Last updated: 3/2023

©2024 Healthcare Quality Certification Commission

CPHQ® by NAHQ®

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL IN HEALTHCARE QUALITY® DETAILED CONTENT OUTLINE[1]

5. Patient Safety (18 Items)

A. Identify technology solutions to enhance patient safety

B. Facilitate the ongoing evaluation of safety activities

C. Apply techniques to enhance the culture of safety within the organization

D. Integrate safety concepts throughout the organization

E. Use safety principles (e.g., human factors engineering, high reliability, high-performance teams, systems thinking)

F. Participate in safety and risk management activities related to:

1. Safety event/incident reporting
2. Sentinel/unexpected event review
3. Root cause analysis
4. Proactive risk assessment

6. Quality Review and Accountability (16 Items)

A. Apply standards, best practices, and other information from quality-related organizations

B. Evaluate compliance with internal and external requirements for:

1. Clinical practice guidelines, pathways, and outcomes
2. Quality-based payment programs
3. Documentation
4. Practitioner performance evaluation
5. Patient experience
6. Identification of reportable events for accreditation and regulatory bodies

C. Maintain confidentiality of performance/quality improvement records and reports

D. Implement and evaluate quality initiatives that impact reimbursement

7. Regulatory and Accreditation (8 Items)

A. Evaluate appropriate accreditation, certification, and recognition options

B. Promote awareness of statutory and regulatory requirements within the organization

C. Support processes for evaluating, monitoring, and improving compliance with organizational, state, and federal requirements

D. Maintain survey or accreditation readiness

1 Approximately 23% of the items will require recall on the part of the candidate, 57% will require application of knowledge, and 20% will require analysis. Each test form will include 15 unscored pretest items in addition to the 125 scored items. | Last updated: 3/2023

©2024 Healthcare Quality Certification Commission