



# **South Carolina Association of School Business Officials**

## **Certification Program Guidelines**

**Revised October 29, 2020**

## **SCASBO Certification Guidelines**

The South Carolina Association of School Business Officials announced the launch of the School Business Official Certification Program in the fall of 2013.

The primary objectives of the certification program are to:

- (a) Enhance knowledge for quality job performance;
- (b) Assist with maintaining required competencies;
- (c) Encourage self-regulation and a high code of ethics;
- (d) Provide professional recognition; and,
- (e) To raise the professional standards of local school business officials.

The SCASBO's Professional Certification Program is designed to provide professional distinction as the highest honor of professional achievement in school business management.

Specific benefits the certification provides include:

- Professional growth that will enhance job performance
- Increased credibility in the education community
- Professional credentials recognized in the State of SC
- Improved marketability in the job market

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for certification as a SC *Certified School Business Official*, a person must comply with the following general requirements:

1. Be an active member of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.
2. Must be currently employed in the school finance arena with a minimum of 5 years' experience. A valid CPA license may count as 1 year of experience and a valid GCFO certificate may count as 2 years of experience in calculating the minimum years of experience. For those wishing to count **either a CPA or a GCFO** towards the minimum years of experience, a copy of the license must be accompanied with your application.

Superintendents must have served as a superintendent for a minimum of 5 years before applying to take part in the certification program.

3. Must complete all 4 sessions of the Certification Program for a total of 40 classroom hours and pass all 4 exam sections.
4. Adhere to the Code of Ethics of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.

To be eligible for certification as a SC *Certified School Business Specialist*, a person must comply with the following general requirements:

1. Be an active member of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.
2. Must be currently employed in the school finance arena with a minimum of 2 years' experience. Superintendents must have served as a superintendent for a minimum of 5 years before applying to take part in the certification program
3. Must complete 2 designated sessions of the Certification Program for a total of 20 classroom hours and pass 2 related exam sections.
4. Adhere to the Code of Ethics of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.

*Individuals not currently employed in a finance position (i.e., principals, human resource officers, board members, etc.)-in a public school system or the SC Department of Education may request a waiver to seek certification. A letter with a written justification, as well as a letter of support from the individuals direct report, must accompany the application.*

*Requests to waive the requirement for employment in a finance position will be considered by the Certification Committee. Individuals will be notified by the Committee once a decision has been rendered.*

*Individuals currently employed in a public school system or the SC Department of Education may request a waiver to seek certification if they do not meet the required minimum years of experience. A letter with a written justification as well as a letter of support from the individuals direct report must accompany the application. Requests to waive the minimum experience requirement will be considered by the Certification Committee. Individuals will be notified by the Committee once a decision has been rendered.*

In order to pass a part of the examination, a person must earn at least the minimum score of 70 established by the Certification Committee for that part of the examination. He or she may pass one or more parts of the examination in any one exam cycle. Successful completion of all sections must be accomplished within 3 calendar years (two exam cycles). [Example: An individual attends certification classes in year 1. He/she will be required to successfully pass all four parts of the exam by year 3. He/she will have six opportunities (two test dates per year). If he/she does not pass all four parts of the exam by the final re-take in year 3, he/she loses credit for other parts of the exam and will be required to re-take and pass all four parts for certification.]

Individuals having received a School Business Specialist certification may upgrade their certificate to a School Business Official certification if doing so within five years of receiving the Specialist certification. To upgrade a certificate the individual must pass the two remaining classes and obtain a passing score of 70. Successful completion of the two remaining sections must be accomplished within 3 calendar years (two exam cycles). [Example: An individual attends certification classes in year 1. He/she will be required to successfully pass the two remaining exams by year 3. He/she will have six opportunities (two test dates per year). If he/she does not pass the remaining exams by the final re-take in year 3, he/she loses credit for any exams successfully completed and will be required to re-take and pass all remaining parts for certification.]

Each certification cohort/class is limited to 30 slots. Cohorts also require a minimum number of participants. Should the number of prospective participants not meet the minimum requirements and therefore not be sufficient to cover to the costs of conducting the course, the Certification Committee may recommend to the SCASBO Board that the certification course not be held that year. In the event that the certification course is not conducted in a given year, those prospective participants will have first priority on the next offering of the certification course. For individuals banking scores, the 3 year banking restriction will be waived for each year the course is not conducted. For each year the certification course is not conducted, one additional year will be added to the individual's banking restriction.

## **MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION**

Continuing professional education (CPE) is required to encourage participants to remain abreast of current practice and to promote continued professional development. Participants who have met the requirement for certification and have been awarded certificates must complete a program of continuing professional education by receiving training which meets the standards approved by the Certification Committee and is consistent with the guidelines published by the Committee.

For a *Certified School Business Official*:

1. A participant must accumulate at least twenty (20) hours each year which will begin on January 1 with no more than four hours in personal development and at least four hours in the accounting/budgeting and finance categories. Participants are also allowed up to eight hours of self-study each year. Up to 10 hours can be carried over into the next year excluding personal development and/or self-study hours which cannot carry over. The participant must note on the CPE reporting form the hours to be carried forward for the next year. On the following year's form he/she must indicate the number of hours that were brought forward from the previous year.
2. The participant must remain a member in good standing of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.
3. If the participant fails to meet the CPE reporting requirements, including late filing or failure to attain the required CPE hours, a fine to be determined by the board will be imposed and the participant will have until May 31<sup>st</sup> to comply. After May 31<sup>st</sup>, the fine will double and the participant will have until July 31<sup>st</sup> to comply. Failure to comply by July 31<sup>st</sup>, including the full payment of any fines, will result in the commencement of the revocation process. Please see the revocation section of these guidelines for additional details on this process.
4. The participant may request and the Committee may grant partial or complete exemption from CPE and/or reporting requirements or an extension of time to report or earn CPE when good cause exists (such as military service or illness or mental or physical disability as certified by a medical doctor.). A written letter requesting a waiver and a justification for the request must be provided to the Committee for review. These exemptions/exceptions will be handled on a case by case basis and will not be approved for an individual more than once every five (5) years, unless it is due to long term military deployment.

For a *Certified School Business Specialist*:

1. A participant must accumulate at least 12 hours each year which will begin on January 1 with no more than two hours in personal development and at least two hours in the accounting/budgeting and finance categories. Participants are also allowed up to four hours of self-study each year. Up to 6 hours can be

carried over into the next year excluding personal development and/or self-study hours which cannot carry over. The participant must note on the CPE reporting form the hours to be carried forward for the next year. On the following year's form he/she must indicate the number of hours that were brought forward from the previous year.

2. The participant must remain a member in good standing of the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials.
3. If the participant fails to meet the CPE reporting requirements, including late filing or failure to attain the required CPE hours, a fine to be determined by the board will be imposed and the participant will have until May 31<sup>st</sup> to comply. After May 31<sup>st</sup>, the fine will double and the participant will have until July 31<sup>st</sup> to comply. Failure to comply by July 31<sup>st</sup>, including the full payment of any fines, will result in the commencement of the revocation process. Please see the revocation section of these guidelines for additional details on this process.
4. The participant may request and the Committee may grant partial or complete exemption from CPE and/or reporting requirements or an extension of time to report or earn CPE when good cause exists (such as military service or illness or mental or physical disability as certified by a medical doctor.) A written letter requesting a waiver and a justification for the request must be provided to the Committee for review. These exemptions/exceptions will be handled on a case by case basis and will not be approved for an individual more than once every five (5) years, unless it is due to long term military deployment.

### QUALIFYING COURSES

1. In order to be approved, a course must meet **each** of the following standards.
  - (a) The course must be at least fifty (50) minutes in duration for one (1) hour of credit and must be actual classroom instructional time exclusive of introductions, announcements, intermissions or other activity which may be part of the program/course.
  - (b) The course must either (1) focus on a subject that is not covered in any core course, or (2) address a core subject in more detail or in a more advanced manner than does the core course. The emphasis will be to enhance the skills of the participant.
  - (c) The sponsoring organization must maintain and issue to the participant a record of attendance. This record of attendance or accompanying documentation must provide an adequate description of the course(s) attended.
2. The Committee has identified the following subjects as appropriate for maintenance of certification.

(a) Accounting/Budgeting

*Examples: Financial statements and reports; measurement, recognition, and presentation of specific financial statement items; computer applications in accounting and auditing; planning and supervision of accounting services; study and evaluation of internal controls; auditing and EDP; substantive audit procedures; independent auditor's reports; government auditing; accounting and auditing for not-for-profit organizations; budgeting-general; accounting and auditing-general (such as courses related to approved practice monitoring; SCDE Updates and Legislative Updates.*

(b) Other

*Examples: Human resource management in government; management information systems; fixed asset management; long-range strategic planning; and Total Quality Management.*

*Software training is limited to four (4) hours per year, may not be carried forward, and must be reported as "other"—unless recognized by national or state standards as allowable CPE for Accounting & Auditing (ex: SC Board of Accountancy or AICPA).*

(c) Personal Development

*Examples: Communication skills; interpersonal management; memory skills; time management; stress management; goal setting; public relations; personal financial planning; and professional ethics.*

In order to qualify for CPE, courses must be related to the accounting and/or finance profession, either directly, or as personal development (see examples above). Unrelated personal interest courses, such as CPR or flower arranging do not qualify, even as personal development. If a participant is unsure about which category a course may qualify for, they are encouraged to contact the Certification Committee Chair, who will contact the Certification Committee on their behalf for an opinion.

For a Certified School Business Official, , a **maximum** of four hours annually may be earned in the area of personal development and a **maximum** of eight hours per year may be earned as a self-study. For a Certified School Business Specialist, a **maximum** of two hours annually may be earned in the area of personal development and a **maximum** of four hours per year maybe eared as self-study. Personnel development and self-study hours in excess of the annual maximum hour limits should not be reported on the CPE form.

Annual Continuing Education Forms will be available on the SCASBO website and are available to participants prior to the beginning of the calendar year in order that the participants may have a formal means of recording continuing education information as it occurs during the year. These forms must be returned to the Certification Committee

after the end of each calendar year. The Committee must receive these forms no later than February 15th of the following year. A minimum of 20 hours a year must be submitted for a Certified School Business Official, or 12 hours per year for a Certified School Business Specialist. The participants will be responsible for maintaining detailed information about continuing education. **Such records will be subject to audit by the Committee for a period of five years.** The Certification Committee will notify any participant if additional information is needed on the hours reported and will advise the participant if the number of hours approved is different than what was submitted.

A record of all CPE hours earned by a person will be maintained by the Certification Committee. **The person earning the hours must ensure that appropriate records are available to verify such hours.** The Certification Committee will maintain such records for a period of five years.

Each Certified School Business Official and Certified School Business Specialist will submit an annual filing fee to be determined by the board when reporting CPE hours.

## **REVOCATION PROCESS**

The revocation process may commence as result of an individual's failure to comply with CPE requirements (as described on pages 4 and 5), including non-payment of fees, and/or failure to maintain an active SCASBO membership in good standing.

The Certification Committee will consider revocation on a case-by-case basis. If the Committee revokes a participant's certification as result of his/her failure to comply with CPE requirements and/or failure to pay required fees, the individual should cease immediately from representing himself/herself as a Certified School Business Official or Certified School Business Specialist. The individual will be allowed to retain the plaque if he/she is in otherwise good standing (active or retired/inactive status) with SCASBO. .

Any individual who is not in good standing with SCASBO should not represent himself/herself as a Certified School Business Official or Certified School Business Specialist. The Committee will also request the return of this individual's plaque.

The Certification Committee will notify an individual of revocation of certification in writing. Such correspondence will include a description of the appeals process.

If an individual wishes to become re-certified after having his/her certification revoked (without successful appeal), he/she will again be required to complete the entire certification process, including payment of fees, as specified by the South Carolina Association of School Business Officials (except in cases of hardships, which are approved by the Certification Committee).



## **APPEALS**

An individual's appeal of the Certification Committee's decision to revoke certification must be made, in writing, to the SCASBO Board within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Certification Committee's decision. The SCASBO Board will respond within sixty (60) days with a final decision.

## **EXAMINATION GUIDELINES**

### **General Overview for Proctor**

The exam will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. Candidates will have 1 hour to complete each of the 4 sections of the exam. The proctor will distribute the first section of the exam to all candidates. As candidates complete the first section of the exam, they will submit their completed exam and materials to the proctor and must exit the exam room until the next exam session begins. At the end of each hour designated for exam sections, the proctor will indicate that time is up and all exams will be collected.

### **Roles of Proctor**

- The Proctor will establish the official start time and announce when the 4 hour limit is over.
- The Proctor will be responsible for distribution of examination sections and collection of completed sections.
- The Proctor will be responsible for monitoring activity in the exam room to insure that all guidelines are followed as outlined below. If violations of guidelines are noted, the Proctor should communicate to the designated SCASBO representative immediately.
- The Proctor will be responsible for collecting all exam materials from candidates and delivering completed examination sections to the Executive Director for grading completion and final determination.
- The Proctor may begin grading completed sections as they are submitted. Exams not graded by the end of the testing period will be graded by the Executive Director.

### **Information Facilitator or Proctor will communicate to Candidates:**

- Please make sure your full name is legibly noted at the top of each examination packet.
- All answers must be provided in ink. Pencil responses will not be accepted.
- Answers must be provided in the designated space.
- You must not talk to, disturb, attempt to communicate in any way with, ask for help

from or give help to another candidate while you are in the exam room.

- If you need assistance, please raise your hand and the proctor will come to assist you.
- You must not ask for, and will not be given, any explanation of the questions on the exam.
- Exam materials are not permitted to leave the exam room.
- All personal items, purse, bags, notes, books, papers, phones, etc. must be placed under the table and there should be no course material or notes visible.
- All cell phones should be off, muted and out of sight during the examination.
- Calculators will be provided for use during examination. Please turn all calculators back in after you complete your exam.
- Restroom breaks may be taken in between sections of the exam. Once you have begun a section, you will not be allowed to leave the exam room until you have completed that section of the exam.
- Failure to comply with these rules could result in disqualification from certification.

### **SESSION AND EXAM FEES**

The cost for a prospective Certified School Business ~~Officer~~ Official is \$1,400. This covers the cost for each of the four sessions (at \$300 each) and for each of the four exam sections (at \$50 each).

The cost for a prospective Certified School Business Specialist is \$700. This covers the cost of both sessions (at \$300 each) and both exam sections (at \$50 each). Any Certified School Business Specialist who later wishes to become a Certified School Business Official will be required to take the remaining two sessions (at \$300 each) and exam sections (at \$50 each).

The cost to re-take a failed exam section will be \$50 per section.

Anyone failing to pass an exam section or sections will be allowed to attend the ~~next~~ offering(s) of class session(s) free of charge until the time that his/her credit for a passing score expires. The exam fee will not be waived for these individuals. [The cost of lunch and any other incidentals are the responsibility of the individual and will not be covered by SCASBO since he/she is allowed to attend the class free of charge.]

### **AUDIT OF COURSE**

Individuals who wish to attend a session(s) but not seek certification may submit to the Certification Committee a request to audit that session(s) prior to the start of the certification cohort. The cost to audit a session is one-half of the normal cost of a session (\$150 each).

The Committee will only allow an individual to audit a session(s) if space is available [i.e., not all 30 classroom slots are taken]. An individual seeking certification takes priority over an individual wishing to audit a session. In no instance will an auditee occupy a slot that could otherwise be filled by someone seeking certification.

Auditing a session does not constitute credit for that session. Anyone who previously audited a session or sessions and later wishes to sit for certification will be required to pay the full cost of and must attend each session.

### **CERTIFICATION SESSIONS**

Four certification sessions will be offered as part of each cohort. Subject areas include:

- School Finance Accounting 101
- Financial Reporting & Auditing
- Budgeting, Internal Controls, & Financial Management
- Capital & Debt Planning/Strategic Planning

A prospective Certified School Business Official must take all four parts. A prospective Certified School Business Specialist is required to take two of the four parts – School Finance Accounting 101 and Budgeting, Internal Controls, & Financial Management.

### **EXAM DATES**

There will be two exam dates per year. The first exam date will be held prior to the end of the school year of each year following the conclusion of the certification course. A second exam date will be offered in the fall of each year before the fall conference as a make-up date and for retakes.