



Certified in Strategy  
and Competitive  
Analysis

# CSCA Handbook

Your Guide to Information and Requirements for the  
CSCA Credential.



# ***Welcome to the CSCA Program!***

Welcome to the Certified in Strategy and Competitive Analysis (CSCA®) credential program. You've taken a great step in broadening your knowledge base and advancing your career. The CSCA credential is designed to help you master the material that is required to earn a seat at the head of an organization's strategy table. Senior finance leaders are increasingly being called upon to apply their analytical and business skills to more strategically oriented organizational issues, increasing the value that they provide to their organizations. They are forming business partner relationships with operational functions to provide and analyze both financial and nonfinancial data to make better business decisions. The CFO team is being challenged to combine skills in strategy, operations, technology, and leadership, as well as accounting and finance, in order to become value creators, not just value stewards. This credential will complement the strong planning and analysis skills that you have already developed by earning your Certified Management Accountant (CMA®). Successful candidates will add strategic perspective to their skill set and build the expertise needed to drive the strategic planning process.

If you have any questions, please contact us at:

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## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information on the requirements for the CSCA credential, including registration procedures, scheduling of examinations, and the examination process itself. Candidates should familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook. As the information is subject to change, we urge candidates to consult the online version of the handbook regularly.

### Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to take the CSCA exam, a candidate must fulfill all of the following requirements:

1. Current IMA member who have earned the CMA/CFM
2. Comply with IMA's Statement of Ethical Professional Practice

### Entering the CSCA program

All fees must be paid before taking the exam. Candidates must complete the CSCA program within two years from the date of entry. If the exam is not successfully completed within two years of entering the CSCA program, a re-entry fee will be required.

### Criteria for Certification

1. Pass the CSCA exam
2. Active CMA or CFM certification status
3. Comply with IMA's Statement of Ethical Professional Practice

## **II. CSCA Examination**

The CSCA Exam consists of 60 multiple choice questions and one case study. Candidates will have three hours to complete the exam.

Candidates will not receive immediate pass/fail results because the case study will be graded off-line. This is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. In order to assure consistency, accuracy, and fairness, all responses are graded during the same time period. Sample grading is performed first to ensure that alternative solutions have been accounted for. Reviewers check the grading throughout the grading process. Once grading is completed, there is an additional review of candidate responses for those on the borderline of passing. Exam results will be emailed and posted to each candidate's online profile approximately eight weeks from the end of the month in which the exam was taken.

### Scaled Score

All scores on the CSCA exam are expressed as scaled scores, ranging from 100 to 400, with the passing score set at 280. The raw score on the test (i.e., the number of items correct) is transformed to this scaled score for the purpose of maintaining uniformity and consistency in the way scores are reported, regardless of which test form a candidate may take.

## Performance Reports

On behalf of the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (ICMA®), Prometric emails performance reports to candidates who have not passed the exam. Performance reports are emailed approximately 14 days after exam results are posted to the candidate's profile. Performance reports show the candidate's performance as satisfactory, marginal, or unsatisfactory for each of the key topic areas from the multiple choice section of the exam as well as the overall performance on the case study section of the exam.

## CSCA Summary Content Specification Outline

- A. Strategic Analysis (25% - Levels A, B, and C)
  - 1. The strategic planning process
  - 2. Environmental scan and competitive analysis
  - 3. Internal analysis
  
- B. Creating Competitive Advantage (40% - Levels A, B, and C)
  - 1. What is competitive advantage?
  - 2. Strategy in a global context
  - 3. Business level strategies
  - 4. Corporate level strategies
  - 5. Functional level strategies
  - 6. Sustaining competitive advantage
  
- C. Strategy Implementation and Performance Evaluation (35% - Levels A, B, and C)
  - 1. Analyzing strategic alternatives
  - 2. Risk management
  - 3. Strategy implementation
  - 4. Strategy measurement and organizational performance
  - 5. Governance, social responsibility, and ethics

### III. Examination Administration

The CSCA examination is administered in a computer-based format, and is offered in English at Prometric Testing Centers located throughout the world. An up-to-date listing of all Prometric Testing Centers can be found on Prometric's website, [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA).

The exam will be offered during the months of March and September, beginning on September 1, 2017.

Register for the exam online or by calling (800)638-4427, or +1 (201) 573-9000 with your credit card information.

Please note: You cannot take the exam more than one time during a testing window.

#### Scheduling an Appointment for the Exam

Once candidates have received authorization from ICMA, it is their responsibility to schedule an appointment at a Prometric Testing Center. Log onto [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA) to locate a testing center, schedule, confirm, reschedule, or cancel your appointment 24 hours, 7 days a week. Instructions are provided by ICMA at the time the authorization letter is emailed. ICMA is not responsible if candidates delay scheduling and there are no longer appointments available within their authorization period. Candidates will be given a confirmation number at the time an appointment is scheduled.

If a candidate does not schedule an appointment or doesn't appear for a scheduled appointment in the selected testing window, the exam fee will be forfeited.

#### Rescheduling or Canceling a Scheduled Appointment

Candidates are required to pay a rescheduling fee to Prometric if they reschedule or cancel their appointment within 30 days of the appointment date. However, appointments cannot be rescheduled or canceled within 72 hours of a scheduled appointment. Appointments cannot be rescheduled to another testing window.

To cancel or reschedule an appointment, visit [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA), or call 800-479-6370 (in the U.S.), or the Regional Registration Contact center (outside the U.S.). Candidates will need to provide their confirmation number. If a candidate does not comply with the cancellation policy, he/she will be considered a "no show" and will need to re-register with ICMA and repay an examination registration fee.

Candidates must sit for the exam during the testing window for which they are registered. Authorizations will not be moved to another testing window.

#### Refund Policy

CSCA fees are refundable within 30 days of purchase date and if no appointment has been set with Prometric. A processing fee will be subtracted from the refund. After 30 days, fees are nonrefundable.

## The Day of the Exam

- Arrive at the Prometric Testing Center 30 minutes before the time of the appointment. If a candidate is more than 15 minutes late for a scheduled appointment, he/she will lose the exam appointment and be required to re-register at full cost.
- The candidate will be required to sign the Prometric Log Book and provide a fingerprint.
- Bring valid forms of identification.
- Bring an approved calculator.

Candidates may be scanned prior to each entry into the testing room to ensure that they do not have any prohibited electronic devices. If a candidate declines to be scanned, the test center administrator will be required to submit a report to Prometric and the ICMA.

Please check Prometric's website [www.prometric.com/ICMA](http://www.prometric.com/ICMA) for additional security requirements and policies.

## Identification Requirements

For admission to a Prometric Testing Center, a candidate must present proof of identity. The name on the identification must match exactly with the name on the authorization letter. The following are the only acceptable forms of valid identification.

1. Valid, signed, non-expired government-issued passport, or
2. Two original forms of non-expired identification, one with a photograph, both with your signature. Acceptable forms of ID include a driver's license, military ID, credit card or bank debit card with photo and signature, bank debit card with signature, or company ID, or
3. A government-issued national country ID card with a photograph (with or without a signature), and another acceptable valid form of ID with a signature as defined in #2 above.

Candidates will not be permitted into the examination without proper identification. If a candidate is not granted access to the exam, he/she will be required to register again for the exam and pay the full fee.

## Calculator Policy

Small battery or solar-powered electronic calculators restricted to a maximum of six functions (i.e., addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square root, and percentage) are allowed. The calculator must not be programmable and must not use any type of tape. Candidates can also use the Texas Instruments BA II Plus, HP 12c, HP 12c Platinum, or HP 10BII calculators when taking the exams. Candidates will not be allowed to use calculators that do not comply with these restrictions.

## Examinee Conduct

All candidates must agree not to disclose the contents of examinations nor to remove examination materials from the testing room.

Cheating will not be tolerated, and all instances of suspected cheating will be fully investigated. Examinees who are caught cheating will have their grades invalidated and will be disqualified from future examinations. In addition, cheating is a violation of IMA's Statement of Ethical Professional Practice, and will result in expulsion from IMA.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the following: copying answers from another candidate during the exam, using unauthorized personal items and study materials during the exam, helping another candidate during the exam, removing exam materials from the testing room, and sharing questions that appeared on the exam.

Specific examples of cheating include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Sharing and discussing questions that appeared on the exam on social media forums including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkUp.
- Bringing into the test room unauthorized personal items such as outerwear, hats, food, drinks, purses, briefcases, notebooks, pagers, watches, cell phones, recording devices, and photographic equipment.
- Bringing into the test room unauthorized study material, such as written notes, published materials, and other testing aids in any format.
- Taking photographs of exam questions during the exam.
- Memorizing exam questions and sharing those questions with any party, including review course providers or other candidates.

The ICMA Board of Regents will make a final determination as to expulsion from the certification program.

Cheating will be considered a violation of IMA's Statement of Ethical Professional Practice and will result in revocation of all ICMA certifications and expulsion from IMA.

#### Candidate Confidentiality

The ICMA makes every effort to maintain candidate confidentiality. Individual score information is not released to third parties without written authorization from the candidate. Candidate participation in the program is kept confidential.

#### ADA Compliance

The ICMA and Prometric Testing Centers are fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Applicants planning to take the examination who have special needs as covered by the ADA should notify ICMA at least two months before they plan to take the exam and prior to scheduling an exam appointment. Applicants are reminded that modifications, accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services ("accommodations") can only be offered if they do not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test.

#### Examination Awards

Candidates for the CSCA are eligible for examination awards based on the total score achieved on the exam. To qualify for an award, a candidate must pass the exam on the first attempt. The candidates with the three highest exam scores will receive awards.



## IV. Responsibilities of a CSCA Professional

Maintenance of the CSCA certification is contingent upon fulfillment of the following obligations:  
CSCA recipients are required to maintain active CMA or CFM status. CMAs and CFMs are required to:

1. Complete 30 hours of continuing education annually, of which two hours must be in the area of Ethics
2. Maintain their membership in IMA
3. Comply with IMA's Statement of Ethical Professional Practice

## V. Resources

There are a variety of resources to help candidates prepare for the exam. In addition to the Content Specification Outline (CSO) and detailed Learning Outcome Statements (LOS), there is a reading list and a resource guide that directs candidates to publications containing in-depth information on specific content areas. Also, upon entry into the CSCA program, candidates have access to the IMA Strategy and Competitive Analysis Learning Series™. Preparation plans should be individualized based on the candidate's education, experience, preferred learning style, and writing skills. Candidates should determine the appropriate mix of available resources that will best help them master the body of knowledge described in the CSO and LOS.

### Content Specification Outline

See the CSCA section of IMA's website for a detailed Content Specification Outline.

### Learning Outcome Statements

See the CSCA section of IMA's website for a detailed description of the specific topics in the body of knowledge.

### IMA Strategy and Competitive Analysis Learning Series™

The Learning Series is a set of online, engaging self-study courses, practice questions, and reference resources that provides an overview of strategy and competitive analysis as well as improves strategic partnering skills. These courses are aligned with the CSCA CSO and LOS. Each course features exercises, knowledge check questions, and a final assessment. You will also receive access to sample practice questions to reinforce your preparation. NASBA-approved CPE credits are also awarded upon successful completion of each course. Required book: *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Strategy*.

### Reading List/Ratio and Formula Definitions

See the CSCA section of IMA's website for the Reading List/Ratio and Formula Definitions.

### Resource Guide

See the CSCA section of IMA's website for the Resource Guide.