

STATE BY STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CPA LICENSE

Peter Aghimien, Indiana University South Bend
paghimie@iusb.edu

ABSTRACT

In a country that is defined by its uniqueness there are no two states that share the same requirements for CPA licensing. While many of the states do have similarities with respect to education and experience, each state throws in their own requirements for licensing. Whether a particular state requires 120 or 150 credit hours, work experience or no work experience, each governing board is setting a standard to enable a CPA to acquire important business and technical skills before receiving their license. All of the states require that the CPA examination be passed, in addition to continuing education, periodic dues, and so on.

The primary difference between an accountant and a CPA is that a CPA is legally allowed to sign off on an audit report for a public company. However, being a CPA and passing the CPA exam is still socially compared to a person passing the state bar exam to become a lawyer or passing the medical boards to become a doctor.

Legislated state mandates for 150-hour education (effectively graduate accounting education) first occurred [in 1977] in Hawaii and Colorado. Today, some states require a person to complete 120 semester hours before they can sit for the exam and require 150 semester hours before they can officially be licensed to perform as a CPA while others states do not allow a person to even sit for the exam unless they have completed 150 semester hours. Although the additional thirty semester hours are open to the student, the NASBA Educational Committee does express its preference that the 150-hour requirement be met by a master's degree in accounting or business, as opposed to simply adding thirty hours to an undergraduate degree.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.