



Academic Internships and Independent Studies FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Rules promulgated by the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy (TSBPA) offer guidance related to accounting internships and independent studies that may be used in meeting the education requirements to be eligible for the CPA Examination. Excerpts are provided below:

RULE §511.51 Educational Definitions

(4) "Independent study" means academic work selected or designed by the student with the pre-approval of the appropriate department or a college or university under faculty supervision. This work typically occurs outside of the regular classroom structure.

(5) "Internship" means faculty pre-approved and appropriately supervised short-term work experience, usually related to a student's major field of study, for which the student earns academic credit.

Excerpt from RULE 511.164 – Definition of 150 Semester Hours to Qualify for Issuance of a Certificate

a) To qualify for the issuance of a CPA certificate, an applicant must hold at a minimum a baccalaureate degree, conferred by a board-recognized institution of higher education as defined by §511.52 of this chapter (relating to Recognized Institutions of Higher Education), and have completed the board-recognized coursework identified in this section:

(1) no fewer than 27 semester hours or quarter-hour equivalents of upper level accounting courses as defined by §511.57 of this chapter (relating to Qualified Accounting Courses to take the UCPAE) or §511.60 of this chapter (relating to Qualified Accounting Courses Prior to January 1, 2024 to take the UCPAE);

(2) no fewer than 24 semester hours or quarter-hour equivalents of upper level related business courses, as defined by §511.58 of this chapter (relating to Definitions of Related Business Subjects to take the UCPAE);

(3) a three semester hour board-approved standalone course in accounting or business ethics. The course must be taken at a recognized educational institution and should provide students with a framework of ethical reasoning, professional values, and attitudes for exercising professional skepticism and other behavior in the best interest of the public and profession. The ethics course shall:

(A) include the ethics rules of the AICPA, the SEC, and the board;

(B) provide a foundation for ethical reasoning, including the core values of integrity, objectivity, and independence; and

(C) be taught by an instructor who has not been disciplined by the board for a violation of the board's rules of professional conduct, unless that violation has been waived by the board; and

(4) academic coursework at an institution of higher education as defined by §511.52 of this chapter, when combined with paragraphs (1) - (3) of this subsection meets or exceeds 150 semester hours, of which 120 semester hours meets the education requirements defined by §511.59 of this chapter (relating to Definition of 120 Semester Hours to take the UCPAE).

An applicant who has met paragraphs (1) - (3) of this subsection may use a maximum of 9 total semester credit hours of undergraduate or graduate independent study and/or internships as defined in §511.51(b)(4) or §511.51(b)(5) of this chapter (relating to Educational Definitions) to meet this paragraph. The courses shall consist of:

- (A) a maximum of three semester credit hours of independent study courses; and
- (B) a maximum of six semester credit hours of accounting/business course internships.

To provide further guidance and interpretation to students, faculty members, advisors, career services counselors, and prospective employing firms participating in the accounting internship program, the following frequently ask questions are offered:

Independent Studies

1. May a student take an independent study course in accounting?

Yes. Provided the student and faculty member who is responsible for the course agree on the course content, assessments to evaluate the student's knowledge, and that the content is not repetitive of prior course content that the student has completed.

2. May an independent study course in accounting be used to meet the 21 semester credit hours (SCH) requirement for Qualified Accounting Courses?

One 3 SCH independent study course in accounting may be used toward the requirement for Qualified Accounting Courses provided that the content is not repetitive of a prior course content that the student has completed.

3. May an independent study course in a discipline other than accounting be used to meet the 150 SCH requirement?

Yes. Provided the student and faculty member who is responsible for the course agree on the course content, assessments to evaluate the student's knowledge, and that the content is not repetitive of prior course content that the student has completed.

Accounting Internships

1. When may a student enroll in an accounting internship course?

Students who have completed at least 12 SCH of upper level accounting courses may consider enrolling in an accounting internship course through the Career Services Department at their university.

2. Is there a limit on the number of semester hours of internships that will be accepted by the Board?

Yes. The Board will accept a total of 6 hours of internship.

3. Does an accounting internship have to be completed through a university to meet the TSBPA's education requirements?

Yes. To be counted as part of the certification requirement, an accounting internship course must be completed through the university that the student is attending so that credit hours earned for the course are recorded on the student's transcript.

4. May a student take an accounting internship through a community college?

The Board does not recognize internships completed through a community college.

5. May a student find their own accounting internship, or does it need to be arranged by the Career Services Department or faculty member at the university?

A student may find their own accounting internship which must be evaluated by the Career Services Department at the university. Career services are responsible for establishing the criteria and monitoring the internships for students to ensure that all requirements and standards are met for academic credit.

6. What are the responsibilities of the Career Services Department with regard to the accounting internship?

The Career Services Department must provide information to the student that follows the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requirements for academic internships. This may include the number of hours worked and the number of weeks worked. The course must be an academic internship and

not a work/study program. The Career Services Department guidelines must be shared with students and employing firms. Career Services must provide students with guidance, and maintain frequent contact with employing firms to ensure that students are:

- receiving sufficient training, whether it is in-person or virtual;
- receiving sufficient supervision, whether in-person or virtual, from experienced and knowledgeable firm employees, who may be CPAs;
- given challenging work assignments that are in line with the student's academic coursework; and
- receiving feedback throughout the internship about their performance.

7. May a student use current employment to meet the accounting and internship requirements?

We do not recommend that a student's current employment be used to meet the accounting internship requirements. In very rare occasions and under strict guidelines this may be considered by the Board. Students should contact the Qualifications Department of the Board for more information at exam@tsbpa.texas.gov or 512-305-7851.

8. What are the responsibilities of the employing firms with regard to the accounting internship?

Employing firms must provide students enrolled in the accounting internship course with the following:

- sufficient training, whether it is in-person or virtual;
- sufficient supervision and guidance from experienced and knowledgeable employees, who may be CPAs;
- provide challenging work assignments that are in line with the student's academic coursework; and
- feedback throughout the internship about their performance.

9. Does the training and supervision for the internship that is offered by the employer need to be in-person, or is virtual training and supervision acceptable?

Internships completed prior to the spring 2020 semester required in-person training, supervision, and work. With the 2020 pandemic resulting in the closures of universities and businesses, students may be receiving training and supervision through virtual platforms as well as in-person. Students may also be working remotely during the internship. Additional information from the employing firm is required.

10. How often should the student expect to receive supervision and feedback during the internship?

The internship is designed to give students an opportunity to apply accounting and business knowledge gained in the classroom to real world situations.

Therefore, the student should expect to be supervised throughout the internship with guidance and feedback at various times throughout the internship.

11. How many working hours are required to earn semester hours for the accounting internship course?

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board establishes the number of hours that are required for an internship. Students should consult with the Career Services Department at their university.

12. How many weeks are required to be worked to earn semester hours for the accounting internship course?

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board establishes the number of weeks that are required for an internship. Students should consult with the Career Services Department at their university.

13. If a student completes an accounting internship through a VITA program will this count?

The Board does not accept VITA program accounting internships. The Board supports VITA programs so that students can provide a valuable community service to individuals who may need assistance with basic tax matters.

14. Does the accounting internship need to be supervised by a CPA?

While a student would benefit from having a CPA supervisor during the internship, it is not required. The supervisor should be well-versed with several years of experience in the accounting work that the student will be performing and can give guidance and feedback on the work assignments.

15. May the accounting internship used to meet the certification requirements also be used to meet the work experience requirements?

No. The accounting internship may be used to meet the certification requirements. If the internship is not needed to meet these requirements, then it may be considered for the work experience requirements. The work experience requirements are detailed in Board *Rule 511.122*.

16. If the accounting internship is shortened due to closures of the business for any reason, can it be used to meet the certification requirements?

The Career Services Department at the university is responsible for ensuring that the number of hours and weeks worked complies with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requirements for an internship to be awarded college credit. Students should consult with the Career Services Department if the internship is shortened for any reason.

17. If I sign up for an accounting internship and find out that I will not be doing any accounting work, can it be used to meet the certification requirements?

No. A student who enrolls in an accounting internship course is expected to perform accounting work that is equal to or greater than the knowledge that would be gained in the classroom. Students should consult with the Career Services Department to determine if the course may be changed to a business internship.

18. Is an accounting student required to take an accounting or business internship course?

No. Uniform CPA Examination eligibility requirements do not require completion of an accounting or business internship course. If you are a degree-seeking student, check with your university concerning the requirements of your degree plan.

19. Should a student expect to receive a job offer at the conclusion of the internship?

Students should consult with the Career Services Department at their university for information on salary expectations and job offers.

20. Will the Board accept multiple accounting internships to meet the accounting education requirements?

The Board will accept no more than 6 SCH accounting internship to meet the certification requirement.

21. Are students required to be paid during the accounting internship?

Students should consult with the Career Services Department at their university for information on salary expectations.

22. Are there guidelines set by the university for an accounting internship?

Yes. Students must consult with the Career Services Department at their university to receive the guidelines for an accounting internship.

23. May an accounting internship be taken after all of the accounting education requirements are completed?

It is unusual for an accounting internship to be taken after a student has completed the accounting education required by the university. Students should consult with the Career Services Department at their university for more information.

24. May an accounting internship be completed in a state other than Texas? In another country?

The Board may consider an accounting internship completed in a state other than Texas.

Business and Other Internships

1. May a business internship be used to meet the 150 SCH education requirement?

Yes. The Board may accept no more than 6 SCH of accounting/business internship toward the 150 SCH requirement.

2. If a student completes an undergraduate and a graduate business internship may both be used to meet the 150 SCH education requirement?

Yes. Both an undergraduate and graduate business internship may be used to meet the 150 SCH education requirement, if needed. The total of accounting/business internship should not exceed 6 SCH.

3. Where can the student obtain more information about the accounting and business internship requirements?

The first place to begin is with the Career Services Department at the university the student is attending. Also, discuss internship opportunities with the accounting and business faculty advisors on campus. Students may also contact the Qualifications Department of the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy if clarification or more information is needed at exam@tsbpa.texas.gov or 512-305-7851.

Internship and Independent Studies Scenarios

To offer further guidance related to questions about internships and independent studies, the following scenarios are provided:

- a. **A student completes 9 SCH of internships where 6 SCH are from accounting internships and 3 SCH are from business internships.**
Only 6 SCH may count towards the 150 SCH requirement.

- b. **A student completes 6 SCH of business internships and 3 SCH of accounting independent studies coursework.**
All 9 SCH may count forward the 150 SCH.

- c. **A student completes 6 SCH of business internships and 3 SCH of independent study. All 9 SCH may count towards the 150 SCH.**
The 3 SCH of independent study could be used towards the 150 SCH along with the 6 SCH of business internships.

- d. **A student completes 9 SCH of independent study.**
Only 3 SCH may count toward the 150 SCH.

- e. **A student completes 3 SCH of accounting internship and 6 SCH of accounting independent study.**
Only 6 SCH may count towards the 150 SCH.

- f. **A student completes 3 SCH of undergraduate accounting internship, 3 SCH of graduate accounting internship and 3 SCH of non-accounting internship.**
Only 6 SCH may count towards the 150 SCH.