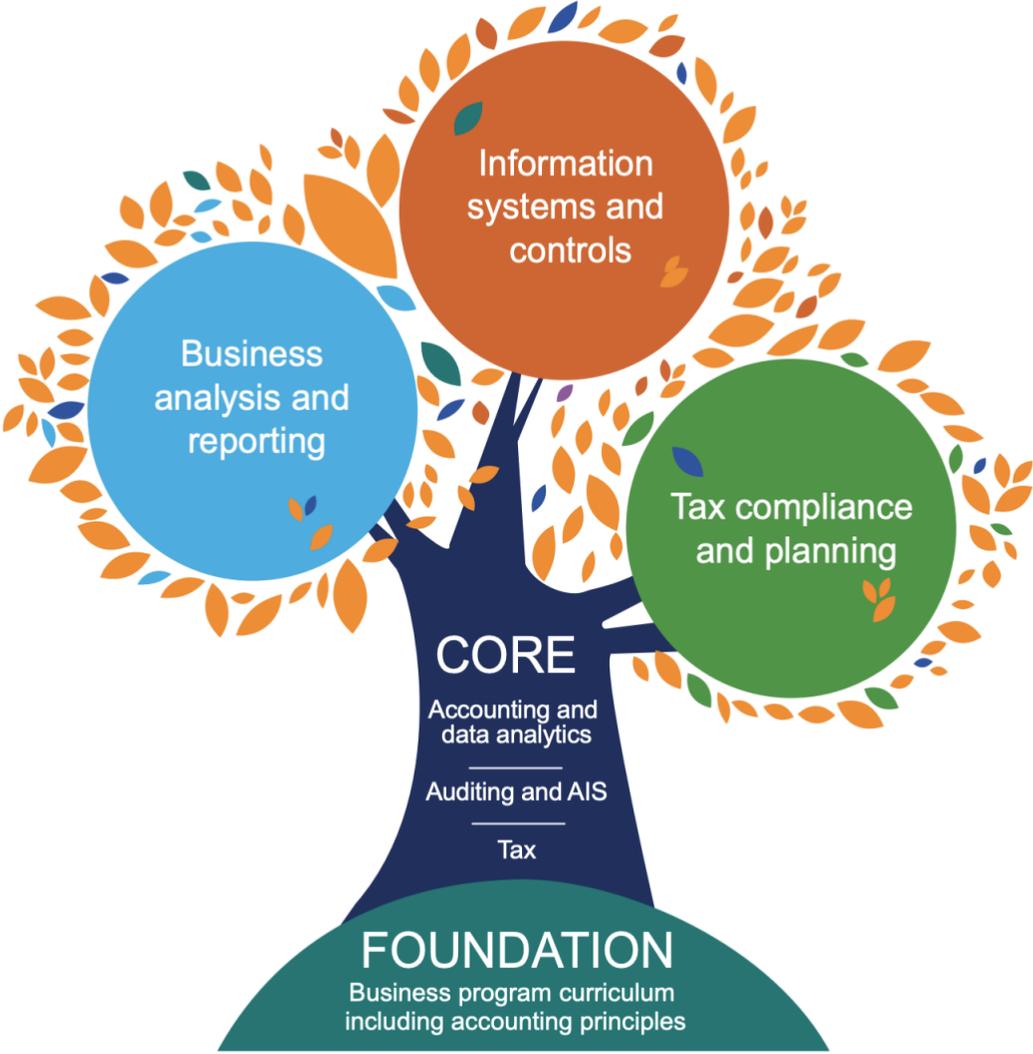


CPA Evolution Model Curriculum FAQs



What is CPA Evolution?

The CPA Evolution initiative is transforming the CPA licensure model in recognition of the rapidly changing skills and competencies practice requires today and will require in the future. It is a joint effort of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA).

To learn more about CPA Evolution, including its background, you can [watch this webinar recording](#) and review the [FAQs on EvolutionofCPA.org](#).

What is the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum?

The CPA Evolution Model Curriculum is an aid to assist faculty who want to prepare their students for the CPA profession. It is materially aligned with the Uniform Accountancy Act Model Rules for education and reflects insights gathered to date through the 2021 CPA Exam Practice Analysis as well as the views of the subject matter experts who served on [CPA Evolution Model Curriculum Task Forces](#).

It is comprised of two main components: (1) detailed content suggestions split into two Parts comprised of three sections each with modules, topics, and learning objectives, and (2) examples of course structuring.

Are CPA candidates required to complete the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum? Where can we share our questions and feedback?

CPA candidates are not required to complete the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum. The educational requirements for CPA licensure are set by state boards of accountancy. By contrast, the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum is an aid meant to assist faculty seeking to prepare their students for the new Core + Disciplines approach to CPA licensure. It is an example, developed at the request of accounting faculty, to provide insight into how an accounting program might transition in light of CPA Evolution.

As we work through the next few years in defining the new CPA Exam, developing academic resources, and preparing students and CPA candidates, we want to hear from you. Please continue to ask us questions and share your feedback by contacting us at Feedback@EvolutionofCPA.org.

What is different about the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum? Would it represent a major change for accounting programs?

Regular revisions and updates have always been a part of keeping an accounting program's curriculum current and relevant. The changes represented in the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum represent an evolution in what is being taught today.

The curriculum recommends a Core + Disciplines program structure, consistent with the approach to the CPA Exam under CPA Evolution. This would involve students taking a common core of courses and selecting one of three discipline tracks focused on Business Analysis and Reporting (BAR), Information Systems and Controls (ISC), or Tax Compliance and Planning (TCP).

Much of the content of the curriculum will be familiar to faculty. It includes a core with topics that are often taught in Intermediate Accounting, Accounting Information Systems, Auditing Principles, Intermediate Managerial Accounting and Introduction to Taxation courses. However, new and emerging areas are taking on increasing significance in accounting practice today and candidates need the right skills to meet marketplace demands.

The CPA Evolution Model Curriculum includes:

- Topics relative to digital acumen and technology in each section of the curriculum;
- An emphasis on data analytics in the Core and BAR sections, including logical thinking, extract-transform-load, data mining and data visualization; and
- An emphasis on information systems in the Core and ISC, including IT governance, information security, system and organization controls and application of digital technologies.

While this curriculum aligns with the needs of the CPA profession, it is also an opportunity for accounting programs. A 2021 AICPA survey of accounting faculty found that over 50% of respondents had seen enrollment declines in their

undergraduate accounting programs compared to historical averages. For programs seeking to prepare future CPAs, now is the time to take a fresh look at accounting education to put these programs in a position of strength for the future.

The AICPA and NASBA are committed to supporting accounting programs through this change. Visit the [Academic Resource Database](#) for resources to integrate into courses now and sign up for the monthly [Faculty Hour](#) webinar series for accounting educators.

Our accounting program would like to prepare future CPAs for the needs of the marketplace. How should my program use the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum when considering curriculum changes?

AICPA and NASBA recommend accounting programs follow these four steps when considering potential curriculum changes resulting from CPA Evolution:

Step 1. Review the modules and topics in the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum. Identify any “gaps”, or subject matter areas that are not currently being taught in your program.

Step 2. Once any gaps are identified, consider your program’s objectives and strategy in light of available resources. Importantly, this should include determining which one, two or three of the disciplines on which your accounting program will focus.

Step 3. After identifying the modules and topics your program will prioritize, first seek ways to build them into existing courses. This could mean removing certain topics from existing courses, which should be done only after first consulting the educational requirements of your state board of accountancy. AICPA and NASBA recommend accounting programs cover “Core” concepts, as well as those relative to the disciplines your program will focus on. Free resources are available on the [Academic Resource Database](#) to support integration of new topics.

Step 4. Consider whether new courses will be necessary and begin the approval process. AICPA and NASBA recognize that new course approval can be a lengthy and challenging process. We will be developing sample syllabi to aid faculty, anticipated to be available Fall 2021.

What if my program would like to prepare future CPAs for the marketplace but does not have the resources to teach everything in the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum?

Once any gaps are identified, each program should establish a transition strategy in light of available resources. Importantly, this should include determining which one, two or three disciplines on which your accounting program will focus.

Some accounting programs have indicated they will offer learning tracks relative to all three disciplines. This may require upskilling existing faculty or engaging adjunct professors to teach new subject matter. The AICPA has programs available to help bring faculty up to speed on relevant subject matter including a free monthly [Faculty Hour](#) webinar series and deeply discounted certificate programs.

Some accounting department heads have indicated they plan to explore partnerships with other schools to provide students with learning tracks relative to each discipline. Still others plan to focus on one or two disciplines.

AICPA and NASBA are committed to supporting faculty throughout this transition and [welcome feedback](#) on how best to achieve this goal.

Do the AICPA and NASBA have any suggestions for schools seeking to launch new courses in response to CPA Evolution?

The approach to curriculum change will differ at each school and will depend on the unique circumstances present at that school. Some accounting program heads have indicated they plan to eliminate certain courses that are no longer aligned with their program’s strategy and are not required for licensure by their state board of accountancy. They then plan to work with academic advisors to identify appropriate substitutions. Other accounting programs plan to create “special topics” courses to fill gaps in their curriculum.

Some accounting programs have indicated their undergraduates will sit for the CPA Exam after January 2024 and have already declared a major, locking them into the curriculum offered in the current course catalog. We've heard from program heads who plan to encourage these students to ask their academic advisor to move their degree plan to the updated catalog.

These approaches will not work at all schools but are meant to illustrate some of the options available to accounting programs. Faculty seeking ideas and suggestions may contact us at academics@aicpa.org.

Can the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum be implemented in an undergraduate accounting program?

The CPA Evolution Model Curriculum does not specify whether material should be covered at an undergraduate or graduate level, as this decision will differ based on the circumstances of the program. That said, we developed a curriculum that is actionable for faculty at programs of all sizes.

The Uniform Accountancy Act Model Rules indicate every CPA candidate should complete 24 credit hours of accounting education in addition to the credits they earn through principles of accounting courses (e.g. financial, managerial). By developing recommended ranges for classroom time we're able to ensure that, on the lower end of the range, a program could address all the Core material in the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum plus one Discipline in 24 credit hours. For universities able to devote more classroom time, like those with master's programs, we've provided sufficient detail to inform a deeper dive into each topical area or to cover more than one Discipline.

It is important to remember that the Uniform Accountancy Act Model Rules are not law in any jurisdiction and that universities should always consider the impact of each state board's education rules on their students' qualification to sit for the CPA Exam and become licensed.

Does the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum cover all 150 semester hours required for licensure?

The short answer is no, it does not. The educational requirements in the Uniform Accountancy Act Model Rules indicate CPA candidates are required to complete a bachelor's degree, an accounting curriculum, a business curriculum, and 150 total semester hours of education. When targeting our efforts, we elected to focus on a university's accounting curriculum that is relevant for preparing future CPAs, except for principles of accounting courses, which are often built into a university's business pre-requisite curriculum.

This means that independent of the content recommended through the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum, it is presumed that students will complete coursework in principles of financial accounting, principles of managerial accounting, economics, finance, business law, and other areas required for licensure by your state's board of accountancy.

Is the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum designed for all accounting students?

The CPA Evolution Model Curriculum is specifically designed with future CPAs in mind. We sought to build a curriculum that provides an accounting student with the skills and competencies required of a newly licensed CPA to meet the needs of the marketplace and protect the public interest. It should be viewed as a roadmap for faculty seeking to prepare future CPAs, not a one-size-fits-all approach to accounting education. When reviewing recommendations within the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum, each accounting program should consider its unique circumstances and the needs of employers hiring its students.

Will students be interested in completing the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum and pursuing CPA licensure?

The AICPA and NASBA conducted a survey of accounting students to answer this question, and the responses we received were very promising.

The survey provided a short description of CPA Evolution, noting that all students would be required to demonstrate core competencies in accounting, auditing, tax and technology as well as deeper skills and knowledge in BAR, ISC or TCP.

Forty-seven percent of accounting students said the CPA Evolution licensure model would increase their interest in becoming a CPA. Another 33% said they are already very interested in becoming licensed, and CPA Evolution would do nothing to dissuade them. Four percent of respondents told us they are not very interested in CPA licensure under the current model and that CPA Evolution did not impact their interest, and 16% said they would be less interested in licensure under the Evolution model.

We asked the “less interested” group to explain their thinking, and themes in responses indicated a lack of understanding the new CPA licensure model. For example, some respondents believed they would only be acquiring and demonstrating competence in their chosen discipline. This represents an opportunity for AICPA and NASBA to provide further clarity.

We saw a similar result when considering the interest of non-accounting majors, including MIS, finance and business analytics majors. Fifty percent indicated CPA Evolution would increase their interest in CPA, with only 11% indicating their interest would decrease.

Which discipline will students select?

The AICPA and NASBA recently conducted a student pulse survey that asked respondents to rank which discipline they would be most likely to pursue. The survey indicated that about 50% of students would select Business Analysis and Reporting, 25% would select Information Systems and Controls and 25% would select Tax Compliance and Planning.

All three disciplines will be equally rigorous. However, based on a student’s interests, skillset and preparation, a student may find one discipline easier than another. Students should be encouraged to pursue the discipline that best aligns with their initial intended area of practice.

What should I be telling my students?

Direct your students to the “For Students and Candidates” tab on [EvolutionofCPA.org](https://www.evolutionofcpa.org). Students can view a recorded webinar explaining CPA Evolution, FAQs and more. Encourage your students to sign up on [ThisWaytoCPA.com](https://www.thiswaytoCPA.com) to get regular communications about CPA Evolution.

The AICPA and NASBA will hold additional webinars for students and will share the information with educators so that you can encourage your students to register.

Will public accounting firms value students that complete the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum?

To study this question, the AICPA and NASBA surveyed hiring directors and Chief Operating Officers at the top 100 public accounting firms. Survey participants were asked to imagine that every accounting program had instituted revisions to their curricula to align with the CPA Evolution initiative. We described the CPA Evolution Model Curriculum, including the high-level topics addressed in the Core and each elective Discipline track, and asked how such an approach to accounting education might affect the firms’ decision making.

Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated their hiring of new graduates from accounting programs would likely increase, and 69% said accounting program graduates would be considered more valuable than they are today. In total, 93% of respondents indicated hiring would likely increase, accounting program graduates would be more valuable or both.