

# Certification – Frequently Asked Questions

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## Why Is Certification Important?

Certifications are desirable because they set apart those with the credential from those without the credential. Certification is an essential tool for maintaining high professional standards. Certification becomes a public recognition of professional achievement-both within and ultimately outside the profession. Becoming HRCI certified represents that HR professionals have demonstrated mastery of the HR body of knowledge and accepted the personal challenge to stay abreast of new developments in the human resource field. Certification provides national recognition of professional achievement, an aide to career advancement and a visual reminder to peers and co-workers of professional achievement through the use of the PHR, SPHR or GPHR designation.

## What Does Certification Involve?

To become certified as a PHR or SPHR, one must pass a 225 question examination. Examination questions for both exam levels cover a wide range of topics. Each multiple choice exam consists of four answers, with one correct answer. Candidates have four hours to complete the examination. Candidates are directed to answer those questions that are easy first and return to the more difficult ones later. There is no penalty for guessing, and candidates should attempt to answer all questions. Questions left unanswered will be counted as incorrect. The passing score for both certification examinations is based on a scaled score of 500.

## What Are The Eligibility Requirements?

HRCI certifications are intended for professionals who have a minimum of two years of exempt-level work experience in the human resource management field. To be eligible to take either examination, candidates must demonstrate that at least 51% of their daily activities are within the human resource function, and those activities are at the exempt-level in positions including HR practitioners, HR educators, HR researchers or HR consultants.

## How Do I Determine The Level Of Certification?

Candidates for both examinations must have at least 2 years exempt-level HR work experience. However, the PHR examination is recommended for HR professionals with 2-4 years of exempt-level experience. It focuses more on the operational and technical aspects of HR management. The SPHR examination is recommended for HR professionals with 6-8 years of exempt-level HR work experience. It addresses HR issues at the strategic and policy level. The GPHR is for HR professionals with International HR responsibilities.

## What Is The Cost?

For 2006, the examination fees are as follows for regular registration (late registration incurs an additional fee):

	<b>PHR</b>	<b>SPHR</b>	<b>GPHR</b>
SHRM Member	\$250	\$375	\$375
Non-SHRM Member	\$300	\$425	\$425
Student*	\$120	N/A	N/A

\* Student fee is a partial fee. The balance due is required upon meeting experience and graduation requirements.

A special option is also available for designated SHRM leaders. Individuals holding the following positions: Chapter President, President-Elect, Certification Chair, State Council Member, Area SHRM Board Member, National SHRM Board Member, along with some others, qualify for the Pay If You Pass Option when applying for the certification exam.

## How does the Pay If You Pass Option Work?

If you qualify for this option, submit your application along with your designated position listed and a \$120 application fee. If you pass the exam, you pay the remainder of your certification fee. If you fail the exam, you owe nothing more.

## What Does The Examination Cover?

	<b>PHR</b>	<b>SPHR</b>
Strategic Management	12%	29%
Workforce Planning and Employment	26%	17%
Human Resource Development	17%	17%
Total Rewards	16%	12%
Employee and Labor Relations	22%	18%
Risk Management	7%	7%

  

	<b>GPHR</b>
Strategic HR Management	22%
Organizational Effectiveness & Employee Development	14%
Global Staffing	10%
International Assignment Management	28%
Global Compensation & Benefits	16%
International Employee Relations and Regulations	10%

## When and Where Is The Exam Held?

The HRCI Certification examinations are administered by the Professional Examination Service (PES) during two testing periods per year: May 1 through June 30 and December 1 through January 30. The established test centers in Wisconsin are in Milwaukee and Madison.

## How Does One Prepare For The Exam?

There are many ways to prepare for the exam, and no one best option. Examples of resources include: Local SHRM chapter study groups, SHRM Learning System, HRCI Certification Guide, College/University-sponsored courses, National SHRM courses, SHRM Course for Certification Preparation, University or professional-level textbooks, flash cards, audiotapes, custom developed materials, and sample practice tests. It should be noted that individuals who participate in study groups tend to have a higher passing rate than those who study on their own. Individuals participating in a local chapter study group or those using the State Council's learning system are eligible for discounted pricing on the purchase of their own learning system.

## What Happens On The Day Of The Exam?

Arrive at the testing center when instructed with admission letter, mailed prior to the exam, and government-issued photo identification. Trust your first impression and identify your answer before reading the choices. Avoid over-analyzing and if uncertain, leave blank and come back to it. Use educated guesses and budget your time. Don't rush, don't look for answer patterns and review your answers if time allows. Be well rested, dress comfortably and take breaks as needed. No books, papers, slide rules, calculators, cell phones, pagers, watch alarms or talking is allowed in the exam room. Food and beverages are permitted only with documentation of medical need.

## What Happens After The Exam?

Immediate preliminary pass/fail score results will be provided to candidates before they leave the testing center. Official detailed score reports will be mailed within two to three weeks of testing. You can take the exam again if you do not pass. Keep in mind that retake statistics are generally not as high as first time test takers.

## How Is Certification Maintained?

Once obtained, the PHR, SPHR and GPHR designation is valid for 3 years after the date of the examination. After that, certified professionals must recertify in order to maintain the credentials.

Recertification is the means by which certified professionals demonstrate their currency and maintain their professional edge in the constantly changing HR profession. Recertification is achieved by either participating in 60 contact hours of updating HR knowledge and/or experience activities or by successfully retesting. Contact hours can be achieved through continuing education, instruction, on-the-job experience, research/publishing, leadership or professional membership.

As soon as you have obtained your 60 credit hours, submit your Application for Recertification with your \$100 fee. Applying for recertification before your 3 year certification period has ended does not change your certification period. Supporting documentation does not need to be included with your application. However, you need to keep the material for 6 months after your certification period ends in case there are any questions or you are randomly selected to be audited.

If you fail to recertify, you must immediately stop using the credentials. Failure to do so not only puts the use in violation of trademark laws, but violates the HRCI code of conduct and the SHRM code of ethics.

For more information on Certification you may contact Karen Brzezinski, SPHR, Interim Certification Director for the Wisconsin State Council of SHRM at [kbrzezin@wausau.gannett.com](mailto:kbrzezin@wausau.gannett.com) or visit [www.hrci.org](http://www.hrci.org).