

# How to Prepare for Institutes Exams

Best Practices for Exam Success



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# Introduction

As you begin your studies with The Institutes, you may feel apprehensive about taking a credentialing exam. This is a perfectly normal feeling. In fact, it is the reason we developed this handbook. Using *How to Prepare for Institutes Exams* will help increase your confidence as you get ready to take your exam. It provides techniques to help you earn a passing grade. It will help you improve your ability to understand and learn the material and to recall and apply it on exam day. We are confident you will find it a valuable resource as you prepare for The Institutes' exams.

To help you get started, Chapter 1 of this handbook identifies some of the primary reasons that people are not successful on Institutes exams. Other chapters focus on ways to overcome exam-related problems. Try the techniques and suggestions in this handbook to find the ones that work best for you. After some orientation, you will develop a routine that both fits your schedule and helps you succeed.

Who are The Institutes? The Institutes are a not-for-profit organization offering knowledge solutions and professional development services to the risk management and property-casualty insurance community. The Institutes' courses and designation programs are recognized for their quality, technical accuracy, and job relevance. Most of these courses and programs have been approved for continuing education credit by state insurance departments. Earning one of our certificates or designations shows you are committed to improving your professional knowledge and skills. Our online products fill knowledge gaps for insurance professionals, which will make you a valuable asset to your company. What you learn will increase your confidence in dealing with peers, supervisors, upper management, and customers and can also enhance your career growth.





# Chapter 1

## WHY DON'T PEOPLE PASS?

Passing The Institutes' exams and attaining the widely recognized professional designations associated with them are the main goals of most Institutes students. However, because The Institutes' courses are rigorous, not everyone is immediately successful. After years of helping students evaluate why they have not been successful on Institutes exams, we have identified several primary reasons why students do not pass: (1) taking the wrong course (2) inadequate preparation and (3) failure to understand exam questions and manage exam time.

### Taking the Wrong Course

Students enroll in Institutes courses for many different reasons. Some are counseled into programs that introduce them to new areas of responsibility. Others may select courses based on their own perception of what it takes to advance at their companies. And some enroll in a specific course merely because it is available or because their friends and colleagues are enrolling. Getting into the right course and program is the best way to enhance your chances of success. Strategies for doing this are discussed in Chapter 2.

### Inadequate Preparation

There is no best way to prepare for Institutes exams. Many students study on their own, while others seek the interaction and discipline of instructor-led, live, and online classes. When classes are not available, some students form small study groups to help each other stay on track and to get a broader perspective on the material (see Section A of the Appendix).

Regardless of your preparation method, you can follow the tips presented in Chapter 3 to help you prepare.



## **Failure to Understand Exam Questions and Manage Exam Time**

At the testing center, students face several challenges, one of which is effective time management. Some students run out of time and fail to answer all the questions, which makes it much more difficult to achieve a passing score. Another prevalent reason for lack of success is the misinterpretation of exam questions. Suggestions for better understanding the questions and managing time during the exam are provided in Chapters 4 and 5.





# Chapter 2

## AM I IN THE RIGHT COURSE OR PROGRAM?

The Institutes provide an educational advising service (see Appendix, Section B) to help you make the best choice in determining where to start your insurance and risk management education. Likewise, many companies have proven career-training tracks that guide their employees into courses in which they are more likely to succeed.

### What Level Course Is Right for Me?

To be successful, you need to match your educational skill level to the degree of difficulty of the course you have in mind. For instance, if you are just coming out of a college environment, you are probably better prepared to work with college-level material and to make a regular commitment to study than someone who graduated years ago and who has numerous competing obligations.

Another consideration is your current level of knowledge about the course content. People learn best when they can attach new information to something they already know. When there is too large a gap between someone's current level of knowledge and the new material, his or her ability to effectively learn and recall the new material is diminished. For example, someone with no understanding of medicine would likely be more successful in a first-aid course than in a course on brain surgery.

### What Program Should I Start With?

Some employers have defined development paths for their employees. These paths most often start with courses closely related to the functional area in which the employee is currently working. Thereafter, development paths generally progress upward and outward to include courses that broaden an employee's understanding of other functional areas and the entire industry. Consulting with your employer about this development path is a smart first step.

Keep in mind that when you can immediately apply new concepts in your work or personal life, you enhance your understanding of the information and your ability to recall it. Therefore, if you are working in a claim department, starting with claim-related courses gives you the advantage of immediately using your newly acquired knowledge. Ultimately, you will use your claim knowledge to transition into studying other disciplines in the insurance and risk management industry.



The Institutes' educational advising service can help you make this crucial decision. Advisers can give you a better understanding of the topics covered in specific courses and help you clarify your educational skill level. See Section B of the Appendix for more ideas for selecting programs and courses. See Section C of the Appendix for information on contacting Institutes advisers or using our online advising system.



# Chapter 3

## PROVEN EXAM PREPARATION TECHNIQUES

### Time Management

The first obstacle to success is a hectic schedule. People who take control of their time and develop a systematic plan that allows both sufficient and regular preparation time are more likely to be successful than those with more erratic schedules and those who use last-minute, marathon study approaches.

Most people will not find time in their regular routine to study. They will have to create time by eliminating other activities. This involves simply picking a regular time of day, even if it is short (for example, 7:30 to 8:00 A.M.) and dedicating it to preparation activities.

### Effective Use of the Study Materials

Making effective use of the primary study materials is the best way to prepare for the exam. These primary study materials are the textbooks, course guides, and practice exams. Supplemental (optional) SMART packages are also available for students.

### The Course Guide

The course guide provides an overview of the content by assignment and several aids to help you study. These aids include Educational Objectives, required reading, outlines, Key Words and Phrases, review questions, application questions, and sample exams.

Some students complete all sections of their course guides, while others use only those portions necessary to reinforce their understanding of the material. Occasionally, topics that will be tested are put into the course guides, so we urge students to read their course guide completely.

### *Educational Objectives*

Many people consider the Educational Objectives to be the key to success on Institutes exams. Because all exam questions are based on the Educational Objectives, the best way to study is to focus on these objectives. A thorough review of the objectives before you read the text will help you focus on the critical components of each chapter while you read.



### ***Required Reading***

The items listed in this section indicate what portion of the study materials (the textbook chapter(s), course guide readings, or other assigned materials) correspond to the assignment.

### ***Outline***

The outline lists the topics in the assignment. Read the outline before the required reading to become familiar with the assignment content and the relationships of topics.

### ***Key Words and Phrases***

These words and phrases are fundamental to understanding the assignment, and they have a common meaning in the insurance industry. After completing the required reading, test your understanding of the assignment's Key Words and Phrases by writing their definitions.

### ***Review Questions***

The review questions test your understanding of what you have read. Review the Educational Objectives and required reading, then answer the questions to the best of your ability. When you are finished, check the answers to evaluate your comprehension.

### ***Application Questions***

These questions continue to test your knowledge of the required reading by applying what you've studied to real-life situations. Again, check the suggested answers to evaluate your progress.

### ***Sample Exam***

The Sample Exam helps you test your knowledge of the material. Use the Sample Exam at the back of the course guide or the SMART Online Practice Exams (whichever accompanies the course guide for the course you are taking) to become familiar with the test format.

### ***More Study Aids***

The Institutes also produce additional SMART Study Aids for many of our courses. SMART Study Aids include Review Notes and Flash Cards. These materials are excellent tools to help you learn and retain the information contained in each assignment.

The Review Notes contain the Educational Objectives for each assignment. The Flash Cards are the Key Words and Phrases with definitions on the back. When SMART Study Aids are available for a course, they are listed on page iii of the course guide.



## Tips for Learning and Remembering Content

### Learning Tips

The learning process can be thought of as a series of levels through which you pass as you move gradually from awareness of an idea to a higher level of mastery. An essential part of this process is to realize that being informed and competent is not simply a matter of “knowing.” It is a gradual progression through which you successively build your knowledge from mere awareness to an ability to use it to solve increasingly complex problems. The starting point for this building process is the use of memory aids.

### Memory Aids

Memorizing makes it possible for you to move through the important early stages of remembering: awareness, recognition, and recall. Memorizing course ideas is not an educational end in itself, but it is essential to being able to use those ideas to answer questions or to solve problems.

The following techniques can help you memorize, reinforce, and retain course ideas:

**Verbalize to reinforce.** When you encounter new concepts, talk about them with someone at the office or in class. Put them into your own words, and try to explain them to others.

**Use flash cards.** Review Key Words and Phrases by using the Flash Cards included with the SMART Study Aids. Or write unfamiliar words or phrases on one side of an index card, with the definition or explanation and a brief example on the other side. The act of writing helps you commit the words and phrases to memory. This can be a useful study tool to use when reviewing for an exam.

**Paraphrase by rewriting definitions of unfamiliar words or phrases in your own words.** Rote memorization of a definition or concept is fine for a short time. But over time, you should be able to move from the author’s definition to one that is stated clearly in your own words. When you can do this, you have moved from “renting” ideas to “owning” them.

**Use ideas that you encounter in your studies.** When the course material is relevant to your present job, use course ideas as you make decisions, correspond with clients, or talk with colleagues.

**Include a series of review sessions in your study routine.** Short-term or long-term reviews can enhance retention.

Instead of merely saying, “I know that” to an Educational Objective, a key word, or a review question, speak or write the answers. Also, periodically try reviewing small portions from several assignments rather than all the information from just one assignment.



Studies have shown that without the reinforcement provided by review, up to 75 percent of new material is forgotten within a matter of days.

### **Applying What You Learn**

New information may be valuable in itself, but the real value is in being able to apply new information in a practical way. If the course ideas are applicable to your work activities, use them in answering questions or solving problems. Your new knowledge can also increase your understanding of what others in your functional area do and how your work activities relate to others in insurance and risk management.

If new course ideas are not applicable to your job, talk with others who work with these concepts to gain a better understanding of the connection between theory and practice.



# Chapter 4

## THE EXAMS: FORMATS AND GRADING

### The Role of the Exams

The primary objective of exams is to measure what students have learned and how well they understand and can apply that information. Why is this measurement so important?

The professional designations and certificates from The Institutes are among the most widely recognized and respected in the global risk management and property-casualty insurance industry. Industry leaders know and have come to rely on the fact that people who have successfully completed these programs have mastered the body of knowledge they represent. Therefore, it is critically important that The Institutes protect the integrity of these programs with a rigorous and fair exam system.

Exam questions are carefully drawn from the entire course to test how well you have learned the material.

### What Are the Questions Asking?—The Exam Development Process

Your knowledge is tested every day by questions that colleagues and customers ask. To answer them, you must select the appropriate information from your bank of knowledge and then organize and communicate it. The Institutes' exams require the same of you. The exams test both your knowledge of course ideas and your ability to organize and evaluate it. This is true for both objective and essay questions. Your exam performance indicates how well you can use the course material to solve problems or explain important ideas.

The development of exam questions consists of a series of steps and involves many Institutes staff members. The goal of participants in the process is to develop exam questions focused on the Educational Objectives in the required study materials. A wide variety of topics are sampled on the exam.

### Educational Objectives

These are the most important study tools in the course guide. Because all the questions on the exam are based on the Educational Objectives, the best way to study for the exam is to focus on these objectives.



Each Educational Objective typically begins with one of the following action words, which indicate the level of understanding required for the exam:

*Analyze*—Determine the nature and the relationship of the parts.

*Apply*—Put to use for a practical purpose.

*Calculate*—Determine numeric values by mathematical process.

*Classify*—Arrange or organize according to class or category.

*Compare*—Show similarities and differences.

*Contrast*—Show only differences.

*Define*—Give a clear, concise meaning.

*Describe*—Represent or give an account.

*Evaluate*—Determine the value or merit.

*Explain*—Relate the importance or application.

*Identify or list*—Name or make a list.

*Illustrate*—Give an example.

*Justify*—Show to be right or reasonable.

*Paraphrase*—Restate in your own words.

*Summarize*—Concisely state the main points.

### ***Exam Balanced Across All Material***

The Institutes' exams include a balanced representation of all the assigned study material. You will not find multiple questions from a few assignments and none from others. Therefore, you should not skip an assignment in the hope that no questions from it will be on the exam.

### ***Reviewed by Advisory Committees***

To help develop the criteria for exam questions and to maintain a balanced selection of exam questions, The Institutes have advisory committees for all courses. The advisory committees are composed of knowledgeable industry professionals who are the experts in the various areas of insurance and risk management covered by The Institutes programs. These committee members are generally not members of the panels that grade the essay exams.

### ***Types of Examination Questions***

Questions are presented in two sections. Each section tells you how many points it is worth.

- Knowledge-Based Exam Questions (Part A of the exam)—The questions in Part A test your direct knowledge of principles, concepts, and terms. They are similar to the review questions in the course guide.





- Application-Based Exam Questions (Part B of the exam)—Part B questions require you to apply your knowledge of the course material to a set of facts or a case situation presented to you. They are similar to the application questions in the course guide.

## Objective Question Formats

Objective examinations consist of multiple-choice questions with four answer choices. There are three types of objective questions: stand-alone, internal case, and external case.

### *Stand-Alone Questions*

Stand-alone questions have a short stem and four answers. These questions do not require any analysis or synthesis of a factual situation or manipulation of knowledge. A simple example is a stem asking, “Which one of the following is the coinsurance formula used in commercial property insurance?” Most of the questions require you to recall or recognize some of the study material or to know the definition of one of the Key Words or Phrases.

### *Internal-Case Questions*

Internal-case questions present a small factual situation that serves as the basis for one question and requires you to apply your understanding of the course material. The factual situation is contained in the stem. You must use the facts of the case to answer the question. For example, a question may present an insured with a given set of coverages and then describe a loss suffered by that insured. The question then may ask how much the insurer would pay for the loss. To answer the question, you must consider the limits and coverages as well as the details of the loss.

### *External-Case Questions*

External-case questions are similar to internal-case questions, but two or more distinct questions are based on a single, detailed factual situation. Again, you must use the facts of the case to answer the questions. An example is a case containing detailed information about an insured’s exposures and coverages. Questions based on the case may include:

- Coverage provided for a given loss
- Other coverages needed for the insured’s exposures
- Coverages provided for new exposures (for example, a change in operations)



## Types of Objective Questions

In addition to knowing the formats of the objective questions you will encounter, it is helpful to know the types of questions that appear on the exams. These types may appear in any of the three formats discussed above.

### *The Correct Answer Type*

In this type of question, the question stem is followed by four responses, one of which is correct. Select the correct answer.

Which one of the following persons evaluates requests for insurance and determines which applicants are accepted and which are rejected?

- a. The premium auditor
- b. The loss control representative
- c. The underwriter
- d. The risk manager

### *The Best Answer Type*

In this type of question, the question stem is followed by four responses, only one of which is best, given the statement made or facts provided in the stem. Select the best answer.

Several people within an insurer might be involved in determining whether an applicant for insurance is accepted. Which one of the following is primarily responsible for determining whether an applicant for insurance is accepted?

- a. The loss control representative
- b. The customer service representative
- c. The underwriter
- d. The premium auditor

### *The Incomplete Statement or Sentence-Completion Type*

In this type of question, the last part of the question stem consists of a portion of a statement rather than a direct question. Select the phrase that correctly or best completes the sentence.

Residual market plans designed for individuals who have been unable to obtain insurance on their personal property in the voluntary market are called

- a. VIN plans.
- b. Self-insured retention plans.
- c. Premium discount plans.
- d. FAIR plans.



**“All of the Above” Type**

In this type of question, only one of the first three answers could be correct, or all three might be correct, in which case the best answer would be “All of the above.” Read all the answers and select the best answer.

When a large commercial insured’s policy is up for renewal, who is likely to provide input to the renewal decision process?

- a. The underwriter
- b. The loss control representative
- c. The producer
- d. All of the above

**“All of the following, EXCEPT:” Type**

In this type of question, responses include three correct answers and one answer that is incorrect or is clearly the least correct. Select the incorrect or least correct answer.

All of the following adjust insurance claims, EXCEPT:

- a. Insurer claim representatives
- b. Premium auditors
- c. Producers
- d. Independent adjusters

**Essay Format**

Just as writing ability is essential to performing many of your job duties, it is also important when preparing for an essay exam. Writing well on the essay exam involves two phases of preparation: reading and understanding study materials (input) and developing techniques to improve the way you express yourself (output).

The following steps will help you answer questions effectively, whether on an exam or on the job. Practicing these four steps as you answer course guide application questions can make the process automatic. Questions on the exam will test your knowledge of facts, concepts, and principles as well as your ability to apply your knowledge in an application situation.

**Step 1: Analyze the Question**

You must determine what the question is asking before you start to answer it. First, look at the format of the question. Some questions stand alone with no introductory material. Others describe a problem situation in the introductory paragraph (the “stem” or “preamble”). The subparts of the question ask you to explain ideas, answer questions, or solve problems related to the stem.

Second, identify the action words that tell you what to do. Find the words, concepts, or ideas that are the targets of the action words. These action and target words tell you what kind of response is expected. Determine the



principle or concept, if any, that underlies the question. Take the following stand-alone question example:

**Explain why catastrophes raise the cost of replacement-cost coverage.**

The action word is.....Explain

Explain what?.....The rise in the cost of coverage

A rise in cost for any reason?.....No, only as it relates to catastrophes

Any type of coverage?.....No, only replacement-cost coverage

Your answer must relate to both catastrophes and replacement cost to earn full credit.

***Step 2: Plan Your Answer***

Think about the structure and component parts of your answer before you start writing. A little planning saves writing time and is especially helpful when longer answers are required. Identify the essential parts of your answer and organize your ideas logically before you begin to write. Making a rough outline or simply jotting down thoughts and sequencing them with numbers can be a helpful step toward effective writing.

***Step 3: Write Your Answer***

Don't waste time restating the question, but if you think you need to state any assumptions or indicate any broad principles on which your answer is based, start your answer with this information. Follow your plan to write the answer and expand on the main ideas with details, explanations, or examples.

Allocate your time for each question according to the points assigned to it. For example, you should spend more time developing your answer to a six-point question than you would for a three-point question. The review and application questions for each assignment in the course guides provide an opportunity to practice.

***Step 4: Evaluate Your Answer***

Review your responses and ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I answer the question asked?
- Did I do what the action words asked me to do?
- Does my answer cover all the subparts of the question?
- Did I provide enough relevant points to support my answer?
- Are my answers missing essential words such as “not” or “never”?
- Have I inadvertently interchanged critically important words such as “mortgagor” and “mortgagee”?
- Do my examples contradict my answer?



## The Grading Process

The Institutes involve industry professionals in all aspects of the exam process. This is especially true for exam grading. It is essential that questions and answers be relevant and fairly assessed.

### Objective Exams

Industry experts review all objective questions before they are used in actual exams to be sure they are phrased clearly and that the answer choices are appropriate. While good objective questions require incorrect answers that are plausible, The Institutes never intentionally use “trick” questions.

The Institutes pretest questions in actual exams, but the results are not counted in the exam grading. The performance of the pretest questions is reviewed, and these questions are used in subsequent exams when appropriate. Students are unaware of which, if any, question items on their exams are being tested in this way.

While students are usually given preliminary results at testing centers when they take their exams, The Institutes reserve the right to review the results when they receive them. Upon satisfactory review of exam results, The Institutes will send an e-mail notification that your official grade report is available on our Web site at [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org).

### Essay Exams

All essay exams are returned to the Institutes for grading. Preliminary results are not available at testing centers. The grading process is composed of several steps to ensure that students' exams are treated consistently, fairly, and objectively.

#### *Grading Panels*

Collectively, those who grade essay exams constitute The Institutes' grading panel. Graders are usually industry employees whose jobs directly involve the subject matter of a particular course. For courses that deal with subjects such as accounting or law, graders may include college professors currently teaching in those areas. Institutes staff members moderate these panels but generally do not grade exams.

#### *Grading Keys*

An Institutes staff member and a grading panel construct a preliminary grading key based on their expectation of how the questions should perform. This key lists all of the possible answers and how many points each answer will receive. Through trial testing of the grading key and panel meetings to discuss and modify the key, a final grading key is set for every question, and criteria are set for grading all of the exams for that course.



### ***Grading Process***

Essay exams are graded using the final grading key. Because the answers to most exams are typed and saved at computer testing centers, they can be quickly routed electronically to members of the grading panel. Exams that score far below or well above the passing grade of 70 percent are not usually graded a second time. Many exams are graded by at least two different graders. If a final grade cannot be established after two gradings, the exam is graded a third time, after which the final grade is determined. The second and third people grading the exam do not know what points were credited by previous graders. The speed of the electronic exam distribution and collection system allows a thorough grading of exams in a relatively short period of time.

### ***Examination Security***

The Institutes use several tools to ensure that exams are administered to all students consistently and fairly. These tools alert us to any irregularities at testing centers so we can launch an investigation. The results of an investigation can be used to invalidate test results and to revoke permission to take future exams.



# Chapter 5

## EXAM-DAY DOS AND DON'TS

Although there is no substitute for regular reading and studying, these tips can be helpful when you are preparing for or taking your exam. You may already know some of these, but a reminder may sharpen your exam-taking skills.

### Dos

- Check your exam confirmation information as soon as you receive it. Be certain that you are registered for the correct exam and the correct exam center and that you understand the requirements at the exam location, such as presenting a valid photo ID with signature. Your name on your exam confirmation should exactly match the name on your photo ID. If there are any problems, call The Institutes' Customer Service Department at (800) 644-2101 as soon as possible. International students should call (610) 644-2100.
- Make plans for your transportation to the exam center, and plan to arrive early. Be certain you know exactly where your testing center is located.
- Be certain you have all of the information and materials (including the exam confirmation notice and photo identification) that you will need to sign in and to take your exam. Know what you can and cannot take into the exam room.
- Practice good time management by assessing your use of time regularly during the exam. The time remaining to finish the exam is displayed on the exam screen. Allow time at the end of your exam to review your answers and to answer any questions you skipped the first time through.
- Remember that you earn credit for answering questions correctly. You do not lose credit for incorrect answers. Therefore, before time expires, take your best guess on any remaining questions.

### Don'ts

- Don't leave any questions unanswered. If you are not sure about some questions, mark them and come back to them later. Don't panic if you don't know the answers to a few questions right away. Often you will find that as you move through the exam, you will recall information that you could not remember at first.



- Don't spend too much time on Part A of the exam. Remember that the questions in Part B are usually more complex and will likely require more time to read.
- Don't let concerns about the exam get you down. The steps you have taken to prepare for the exam should give you confidence in your ability to answer the exam questions.
- Don't cram at the last minute, including the night before the exam. Cramming can lead to confusion and heighten your stress.

To keep your study momentum going after the essay exam, you will have to consider what your next study step will be—wait for your results or proceed with your next course. Whatever route you decide to take, you should feel comfortable with it.





## Chapter 6

### WHEN WILL I GET MY GRADE?

When official grade reports become available depends on the type of exam. Here are some guidelines:

- *Computer Essay Exam.* E-mail grade reports are usually issued as soon as grading is completed. The official grade report is available on our Web site within four weeks of the exam date, unless grading is delayed.
- *Computer Objective Exam.* The computer-issued Unofficial Grade (P or N grade) is usually issued at the exam center. Official grade reports from The Institutes are available on our Web site within two weeks of the exam date. In some cases (new course material, for example), grading might not take place until the end of the testing window.
- *Paper-and-Pen Exams-on-Request (EOR).* Grade reports are available on our Web site one week after The Institutes receives the exam.
- *International Student Exam.* CPCU grade reports are available on our Web site within four to six weeks of the exam date.
- *Grading Delays.* Grading delays may occur when tests are based on new or revised material. This most often occurs during the January–March testing window. Please note that the grading of all CPCU exams is delayed for up to seven weeks during the January–March testing window.

### What If I'm Unsuccessful?

Realize that many students don't pass Institutes exams. If you need to retake an exam, plan to do so as soon as possible. Students who retake an exam in the same window or next window have proved to be more successful than students who wait.

It is important to think about how you studied and how much time you spent in preparation. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Did I have the correct study materials?
- Was this the best course for me, or are other options more appropriate?
- Did I give myself enough time to learn the course material, or did I cram?
- Did I use the exercises in each assignment in the course guide?

If the exam was particularly difficult for you, consider joining a local class or an online class to help you prepare to retake it. Review how well you did by looking at the online Grade Analysis Based on Educational Objective Performance (see Section C of the Appendix) and at the assignment rankings on your grade report.



Did you have difficulty with concepts you thought you understood? This could indicate a misunderstanding of what the questions asked. Additional analysis of your non-passing exam is available online at The Institutes' Web site (see Section C of the Appendix).

Depending on how well you answered questions related to each assignment, you might want to incorporate the following guidelines into your review activities.

### **For Assignments in the 70% or Better Range**

You did rather well in these assignments. Begin your review by going over the Educational Objectives for each. This may be all the review you need. If you have difficulty with the objectives, look at other areas such as the Key Words and Phrases, the review and application questions, and your notes.

### **For Assignments in the 50–70% Range**

You did not exhibit clear mastery of the material in these assignments. The first step is to review the Educational Objectives, the Key Words and Phrases, and the review and application questions. Pay special attention to those areas that caused problems in your review. If you still feel uneasy about your understanding of the materials, review your notes and seek help from others.

### **For Assignments in the 50% or Less Range**

This is where you lost most of your points. Restudy each assignment in this group as if it were the first time you studied it. Use the Educational Objectives to focus your study, and make certain that you can perform these objectives.

After your review, some areas may still be unclear, or there may be questions you cannot answer with confidence. When this happens, draw on the experience and expertise of others, such as course leaders or experienced colleagues.

The Institutes provide the following forms of additional assistance to nonpassing students:

- *Graders' comments* (for essay examinations): These are general comments about a student's answers that, in the opinion of the grader, caused a loss of points. The comments will not refer to particular questions or provide correct answers, but will instead identify characteristics of the student's answers that caused problems. For example, the comments may note that answers tended to be too general with not enough detail, that they failed to answer the question asked, or that examples used in the answer were not appropriate. *A nonpassing student must request this information within one year of taking an examination.*
- *Educational advising*: For additional aid in developing or refining your study routine or planning future Institutes course study, call our Customer Service Department.



# Appendix

## TOPICS

**Section A: Selecting an Exam Preparation Method**

**Section B: Selecting a Program, Identifying a Starting Course, and Planning Your Study**

**Section C: The Institutes Information Sources**

### Section A: Selecting an Exam Preparation Method

There are three principal methods of preparing for Institutes exams. Please remember that you are primarily responsible for what you learn; placing undue reliance on others is risky at best.

- **Independent Learning** On your own, perform the study activities recommended in each course guide. This approach gives you the greatest flexibility as you study and prepare each assignment.
- **Group Learning Without a Course Leader.** In addition to your independent study, meet weekly with a small group of colleagues. In this situation, the responsibility for pre-class study rests with each individual, and all or selected members of the group share the responsibility for moderating the weekly discussion sessions.
- **Group Learning With a Course Leader.** In addition to your independent study, enroll in a live or an online class with a formal course leader. This class might be sponsored by your own organization or by a CPCU Society chapter, college, insurance association, agents' association, independent course provider, or similar group.
- To find out whether a class is offered in your area, use The Institutes' Public Class List under "Student Services" at our Web site, [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org), or call our Customer Support Department for assistance.

Historically, there has been a narrow spread in the passing ratios for these study methods. This indicates that each can be highly effective for students who are motivated for personal and professional development. Prospective students need not postpone involvement in Institutes courses simply because no formal class or study group is available.



## Section B: Selecting a Program, Identifying a Starting Course, and Planning Your Study

The Institutes' courses and designation programs are recognized for their quality, technical accuracy, and job relevance. Earning one of our certificates or designations shows you are committed to improving your professional knowledge and skills. What you learn will increase your confidence in dealing with peers, supervisors, upper management, and customers and can also enhance your career growth.

Often, the decisions you make before you begin your study play the biggest role in determining the outcome of your efforts. Finding the best program and the right course with which to start are crucial factors that will put you on the right educational path. Careful planning can ensure satisfying and successful study. The following steps can help you plan your study:

- **Establish** your learning needs and goals—Does your employer have a specific development plan for your short-term and/or long-term career? Where do you see yourself in five years? What educational accomplishments will best help you get there?
- **Gather** information about your study options. There are many good educational programs to choose from, several of which are from The Institutes. More information about Institutes programs is available on our Web site at [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org). There, you can also find information about class preparation opportunities. You may also want to consult your company's human resources department to determine whether any in-house offerings are available.
- **Match** your background and current learning needs to the program that best meets those needs. What is your current job? Is your education in this field already sufficient to do your job well? What are your educational strengths? You may be able to take a course that builds on your college major.
- **Select** the best program or course, and plan your study.

### Information About Institutes Programs

Some Institutes programs, such as the Introduction to Property and Casualty Insurance (INTRO) course, the Associate in General Insurance (AINS), and the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) program, provide an overview of the property-casualty insurance business. INTRO presents information at a basic level, while CPCU is more in-depth. The AINS program is more advanced than INTRO but not as in-depth as CPCU.

Other programs, such as Associate in Claims (AIC), Associate in Risk Management (ARM), Associate in Personal Insurance (API), and Associate in Commercial Underwriting (AU), provide an in-depth study of insurance functions or specialty areas of insurance for students who want to broaden their present understanding of a specific functional area.



The Institutes recommend that students begin some programs (such as AINS, AIC, or ARM) with a specific course in order to set the stage for concepts that are treated in more depth in the other courses in the program. Refer to Succeed, The Institutes' professional development catalog, or contact Customer Service for more information.

## Planning Suggestions

If you have less than a year of insurance experience:

- Consider taking the INTRO course as a foundation for later study of AINS, the Associate in Insurance Services (AIS), or the Accredited Adviser in Insurance (AAI) designation programs.
- Take the Introduction to Claims course before AIC, the Introduction to Risk Management course before ARM, or the Introduction to Underwriting course before the AU or API program.

If you have fewer than four years of insurance experience; have a college background in business subjects such as accounting, finance, or business law; and want to pursue the CPCU designation, you may want to:

- Begin with another CPCU course that builds on your previous college study or experience in the insurance industry. Because there is no prescribed sequence, CPCU can be taken in any order.
- Begin with INS to strengthen your knowledge of insurance. (Completion of the AINS program waives CPCU 553 for the Commercial track and CPCU 557 for the Personal track in the CPCU program.)

If you want to broaden your current understanding of a specific insurance function or specialty area, you may want to consider:

- A specialty program that focuses on an industry function such as underwriting, claims, risk management, or production
- A specialty program that focuses on an insurance specialty area such as finance and accounting, technology, surplus lines, or reinsurance

## If you would like assistance from The Institutes in planning your study:

- Contact our Customer Service Department at (800) 644-2101—610-644-2100 for international students—or at [customerservice@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:customerservice@TheInstitutes.org)
- E-mail [advising@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:advising@TheInstitutes.org)
- Complete a Self-Inventory for Prospective Institutes Students form and submit it. This form is available online in the Student Services section and from Customer Service.



## SECTION C: THE INSTITUTES INFORMATION SOURCES

This list provides Institutes students with contact information for ordering study material, registering for the Institutes exams, learning about college degrees using Institutes courses, and obtaining transcripts for college credit.

### Contact Information

- *Succeed*, The Institutes' professional development catalog: To receive a copy, call The Institutes' Customer Service Department (800) 644-2101.
- Study materials: Phone (800) 644-2101 or visit [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)
- Examination registration: E-mail [customerservice@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:customerservice@TheInstitutes.org) or visit [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)
- Official transcripts: Fax (610) 640-9576 or visit [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)
- State CE credit certificates: Visit [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)
- CPCU matriculation: Fax (610) 651-7652, Phone (800) 644-2101
- EOR certificates: Phone (800) 644-2101
- ACSR (Accredited Customer Service Representative) certificates: (800) 644-2101

### Information for International Students:

E-mail: [customerservice@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:customerservice@TheInstitutes.org)  
Shipping and handling quotes: [quote@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:quote@TheInstitutes.org)  
Web site: [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)

Phone: (610) 644-2100  
Fax: (610) 640-9576

Canada only:  
Phone: (800) 644-2101

### Contact Information

Educational Advising: Phone (610) 644-2100 or e-mail [advising@TheInstitutes.org](mailto:advising@TheInstitutes.org)  
Web site: [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org)  
Student Services/Educational Advising  
Grade Analysis at [www.TheInstitutes.org](http://www.TheInstitutes.org).



## **Information about College Degrees Using The Institutes' Courses**

Some colleges and universities accept The Institutes' courses for credits toward degrees. For information about these opportunities, visit the Student Services/Earn Credits section of our Web site.

Information about American Council on Education (ACE)

Phone: (202) 939-9434

Web site: [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu)

Mailing address:

College Credit Recommendation Service

American Council on Education

1 DuPont Circle, NW

Washington, DC 20036















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