

CRC® Test Specifications

The CRC® Comprehensive Examination is designed to test Candidates' understanding of retirement planning concepts and principles in order to competently fulfill their responsibilities as retirement counseling professionals. CRC® certification is appropriate for early career retirement planning professionals who would like to increase their knowledge and skills, as well as for more experienced professionals who would like to enhance their retirement planning expertise.

CRC® Candidates must successfully pass the four-hour proctored multiple-choice examination. The examination is administered four times each year in January, April, July and October at computer-based testing centers. The examination consists of 200 multiple-choice questions. 175 of the questions are operational and contribute equally to each Candidate's total score. Each question has a single correct response and there is no penalty for guessing. The remaining 25 are pilot questions which do not count towards the Candidate's score. The pilot questions cannot be distinguished from those that are scored. The passing point for the exam is determined by a panel of subject matter experts who carefully review each exam question to determine the basic level of knowledge that is expected. The passing point for the exam is established to identify Candidates with an acceptable level of knowledge. For detailed information on how the exam is developed and administered, refer to the CRC® Program Policies Manual, available at <https://infre.org/about-crc-exam/>

To ensure that the examination is testing the most up-to-date and relevant concepts, InFRE conducts a detailed practice analysis of the retirement planning profession no less than every five years. The following examination content outline was developed from the most recent practice analysis completed in December 2018. The content outline contains the domains of practice and associated tasks and knowledge statements which are the basis for the CRC® Comprehensive Examination.

Domains of Practice	Percent of Exam
Domain 01: Identify Needs, Concerns and Goals in Terms of Quantitative and Qualitative Factors by Career Stage/Phase of Retirement	29%
Domain 02: Design Retirement-readiness and Post-retirement Strategies within the Context of the Regulatory, Operational and Structural Plan Environment	34%
Domain 03: Facilitate the Implementation of the Retirement-readiness and Post-retirement Strategies	18%
Domain 04: Evaluate, Adjust, and Document Retirement Strategies Across Career Stages/Retirement Phases	12%
Domain 05: Provide Education Content and Programs	7%
Total	100%

Domain Related Tasks	
Domain 01: Identify Needs, Concerns and Goals in Terms of Quantitative and Qualitative Factors by Career Stage/Phase of Retirement	
01-01	Create an open climate for in-depth discussion of needs, goals and objectives focusing on retirement.
01-02	Obtain and explore the client's/employee's: goals, habits, perceived challenges to retirement planning, and level of financial awareness.
01-03	Gather personal information and financial data necessary for the retirement planning process.
01-04	Implement/communicate procedures for securing personal identifiable information shared by client/employee/employer.
01-05	Introduce clients/employees to the concepts of basic retirement-readiness elements, including financial elements, psychosocial, medical, and by career stage or retirement phase.
01-06	Facilitate the development of a prioritized set of retirement goals.
01-07	Identify and communicate obstacles, challenges, and the role of a client's/employee's personal responsibility in the attainment of retirement goals.
01-08	Communicate long-term investment strategies for the attainment of retirement goals (for example, dollar cost averaging, compounding interest, asset allocation/rebalancing).
01-09	Assess the client's/employee's personal and financial retirement readiness in order to identify gaps in preparedness (for example, health status, social network, income gaps).
01-10	Assess client's/employee's preparedness for end-of-life care or incapacitation (for example, existence of advanced medical directives, power of attorney, health care proxy).
01-11	Identify legacy/wealth transfer intentions and whether appropriate documents exist to satisfy those intentions.
01-12	Recognize fraudulent activity and senior protection issues (for example, related to working with other advisors, behaviors of family members, inappropriate use of products) applicable to clients/employees and notify appropriate authorities, if necessary.
01-13	Confirm and ensure common understanding of client's/employee's needs, concerns, financial habits, and goals.
Domain 02: Design Retirement-readiness and Post-retirement Strategies within the Context of the Regulatory, Operational and Structural Plan Environment	
02-01	Provide overview and raise awareness of effective retirement planning strategies and methods.
02-02	Discuss potential retirement risks (for example, economic factors, inflation, longevity, market, quality of life issues, tax implications) and options for mitigating risks (for example, increasing savings, continuing to work, re-arranging asset allocation, reducing retirement spending, creating lifetime income stream).

- 02-03 Conduct analysis of geographical and financial retirement readiness in light of needs, concerns, and goals (for example, estimate duration of current assets, housing options).
- 02-04 Create an awareness of psychological and social retirement readiness issues in light of needs, concerns, and goals (for example, purpose in life, creating and maintaining social networks).
- 02-05 Create an awareness of health and medical retirement readiness issues in light of needs, concerns, and goals (for example, changing healthcare needs, healthy life-style choices).
- 02-06 Identify investment assets and liabilities as well as additional assets that could be included in planning.
- 02-07 Determine investment risk tolerance and time horizon of clients/employees.
- 02-08 Identify initial target asset allocation.
- 02-09 Identify and evaluate insurance coverages (for example, medical, disability, long-term care, life, Medicare supplemental policies) given client's/employee's stage of retirement/retirement planning.
- 02-10 Identify sources of lifetime and managed resources to create retirement income.
- 02-11 Determine essential and discretionary expenses to align with lifetime and managed income sources respectively.
- 02-12 Determine retirement estimates based on age, retirement resources, and other retirement data.
- 02-13 Identify taxation and fee implications of various accumulation, rollover and distribution strategies and inform client/employee of the net effect of taxes as well as fees.
- 02-14 Identify and determine the account(s) and financial products to use for accumulation as well as distribution.
- 02-15 Model income distribution strategies in light of needs, concerns, goals, and risks based on retirement needs.
- 02-16 Evaluate and prioritize options for closing gaps (for example, income, housing, social structure) in light of client's/employee's needs, concerns, goals, and risks.
- 02-17 Review and recommend programs and resources consistent with life stage and needs, concerns, goals, and risks.

Domain 03: Facilitate the Implementation of the Retirement-readiness and Post-retirement Strategies

- 03-01 Facilitate client's/employee's determination of life-stage planning goals.
- 03-02 Encourage client/employee to maximize the utilization of employer-sponsored benefits and personal retirement resources.
- 03-03 Review and recommend retirement plan distribution options (for example, systematic withdrawal, annuities, pension-plan options, or combination thereof).
- 03-04 Create a plan to maximize utilization of Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid benefits.
- 03-05 Create a plan that aligns income and asset allocations with the client's/employee's retirement plan objectives.

03-06	Facilitate the implementation of transition plans to assist clients/employees as they move through life stages/events (for example, from earnings to spending stages, from accumulation to distribution stages).
03-07	Recommend review of beneficiary designations for appropriateness and timeliness.
03-08	Refer clients/employees to appropriate professionals and/or other resources for implementation of specific plans (for example, estate, tax, insurance, trusts).
Domain 04: Evaluate, Adjust, and Document Retirement Strategies Across Career Stages/ Retirement Phases	
04-01	Analyze results/progress of planning goals and objectives based on social, medical, and financial considerations.
04-02	Discuss gaps, progress, and/or achievement of goals with the client/employee.
04-03	Assess client's/employee's satisfaction with retirement plan, including risk tolerance and basic understanding of the plan.
04-04	Reevaluate goals and assumptions based on performance against benchmarks and changes in life stage/events.
04-05	Modify and/or rebalance portfolio based on desired asset allocation.
04-06	Document all discussions, recommendations, and changes.
Domain 05: Provide Education Content and Programs	
05-01	Develop/provide tailored educational content (for example, by career stage, country of origin, culture, educational background/level of understanding) using a variety of media (for example, seminars, one-on-one meetings, web sites, print materials, virtual meetings).
05-02	Identify a variety of follow-up action items to increase the probability of favorable behavior towards retirement planning (for example, increase savings rate, develop support network outside of work, contact other advisor(s)).
05-03	Monitor outcomes of educational programs (for example, plan participation, follow-up appointments, workshop participation) and measure the effectiveness of those programs.
05-04	Create awareness of resources available (for example, seminars, informational package, plan highlights) to help clients/employees understand workplace retirement plans.

KNOWLEDGE Required to Perform CRC® Tasks

01. Basic interpersonal communication styles (for example, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, assertive)
02. Basic interpersonal communication skills for effective communication with clients (for example, verbal, nonverbal, listening)
03. Methods to establish rapport with diverse client groups
04. Basic presentation skills
05. Methods to effectively communicate financial concepts, terms and acronyms to individuals and groups
06. Adult learning styles (for example, visual, auditory)
07. Counseling principles and techniques to address client's retirement planning needs across career and retirement stages (for example, early, mid, and late)
08. Types of employee benefit plans (for example, flexible benefit plans, corporate benefit plans, executive benefit plans, Taft-Hartley benefit plans, public employee benefit plans-457 plans, 403(b) plans, multiple-employer benefit plans (MEPs))
09. Regulations affecting retirement plans and the retirement planning process
10. Fiduciary and professional responsibility when acting in the best interest of the client
11. Differences in roles and scope of responsibilities of a retirement counselor in public, private, and Taft-Hartley sectors
12. Financial mathematics (for example, compound interest, time value of money, present/future value of an annuity)
13. Basic financial principles (for example, inflation, cash management, diversification, allocation, rebalancing, risk-return relationship)
14. Asset classes (for example, equities, fixed income, alternatives, money market)
15. Portfolio management strategies (for example, strategic, tactical)
16. Various budgeting techniques, including cash and debt management
17. Technology, applications and programs used for analysis, data collection and sharing, and presentations (for example, live and virtual)
18. Tools to assess various types of risk and risk tolerance (for example, Monte Carlo simulations, risk-tolerance questionnaires)
19. Modeling and simulation techniques (for example, Monte Carlo, linear, stochastic)
20. Tools for measuring goal attainment
21. Available information and resources for professionals and clients (for example, websites, software, publications)
22. Basic portfolio terminology (for example, beta, standard deviation, inverse relationship)
23. What is included in total compensation
24. Distribution options, strategies and requirements for retirement accounts
25. Retirement account rollover/transfer rules and strategies
26. Beneficiary elections and ramifications (for example, primary, contingent, per stirpes, per capita)
27. Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid options, and impact on retirement planning decisions
28. Qualified and non-qualified retirement plans (for example, defined benefit, defined contribution, cash balance, 457, and IRAs), including scope, limits, tax implications, major features such as automatic enrollment and default choices |
29. Healthcare plans (for example, HMOs, PPOs, HSAs, HRAs, prescription drug plans, FSAs), including scope, limits, and major features
30. Health insurance planning

31. Investments used in planning for both retirement accumulation and distribution phases
32. Pros and cons of various investments within taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-free accounts
33. Retirement timing decisions as related to investments used in retirement planning process
34. Impact of breaks in employment on financial and retirement planning
35. Types of risk during retirement accumulation phase (for example, investment risk, market risk) and how to manage them
36. Types of risks during retirement distribution phase (for example, longevity, inflation) and how to manage them
37. Personal non-employer sponsored savings options
38. Retirement lifestyle and housing options
39. Psychological and social challenges of retirement
40. Principles of healthy aging
41. The financial/emotional considerations of elder care and the implications to the individual's retirement planning
42. Financial considerations related to dependent care
43. Financial considerations related to changes in family relationships (for example, divorce, returning children/parents)
44. Behavioral finance issues (for example, emotional attachment to investments, loss aversion, indifference, generational differences)
45. Principles of estate planning and wealth transfer vehicles (for example, living trusts, wills, and advanced medical directives)
46. The impact of college savings plans (for example, 529, Educational Savings Account) on retirement savings and wealth transfer
47. Methods of utilizing home equity for retirement income (for example, reverse mortgages, home equity line of credit)
48. Insurance products (for example, life insurance, annuities, disability, health, property-casualty, long-term care) and survivor benefits
49. Options for funding long-term care (for example, risk transfer/insurance, risk retention/self-insure, family support system)
50. The use of life insurance in retirement
51. Types of fees (for example, plan-related, administrative, investment, insurance, surrender, management, commissions) and their impact on the accumulation of wealth
52. Income tax basics (for example, taxable income, deductions, tax credits, penalties, taxation of social security)
53. Early withdrawal rules and hardship withdrawal criteria
54. Tax reduction strategies (for example, order of withdrawal, delaying income, tax-free investments, Net Unrealized Appreciation (NUA))
55. Basic economic principles (for example, opportunity costs, monetary policies)
56. Business and economic cycles and types of investments suitable to economic environment
57. Signs of elder abuse and reporting requirements and procedures
58. Roles and responsibilities and standards to select complementary professionals (for example, attorneys, accountants, financial advisors, health advisors, brokers)
59. Techniques to evaluate client satisfaction
60. Techniques to evaluate plan progress
61. Procedures for monitoring and making adjustments to the plan
62. Requirements for documentation and retention
63. Unique retirement planning needs of diverse population groups
64. Ethical behavior and CRC[®] Code of Ethics

