

# The Ultimate Guide to CBAP Certification FAQs

Watermark Learning holds monthly [IIBA Certification chat sessions](#), and we get great questions each time. I compiled many of the questions received over several months and answered them below. Most are about [CBAP certification](#) and we'll publish a separate blog post on [ECBA questions](#).

This extensive Guide is organized into five sections. Some questions could apply to multiple sections and we made a judgement on where they best seemed to apply. The sections are:

1. General
2. CBAP Study Tips
3. CBAP Materials:
  - CBAP Exam Simulator and Questions
  - Study Guide and Flashcards
4. CBAP Exam
5. CBAP Application

## 1. General

**Q. What is the passing mark for CBAP? How many have taken the v3 exam? What is the estimated pass rate?**

A. IIBA does not reveal any of these numbers, but we assume the passing mark it is 70% and the estimated

first-time pass rate is 80% and may be higher.



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### **Q. How do industries view CCBA vs CBAP, as far as credit worthiness?**

A. Consulting organizations are where we've seen the most adoption of CCBA and we assume they value it. Part of the reason is some consultants don't qualify for the 7500 hours needed for CBAP certification. Consulting companies view the CCBA (and CBAP for those who qualify) as showing their people have the experience and knowledge of a qualified BA. Firms with large numbers of BAs, particularly younger BAs, feel that certifications give them an edge over the competition when marketing their employees.

There is generally a wide range of support and value for IIBA certifications. From what we hear, organizations that value process are more likely to value CBAP/CCBA. This would often be financial organizations, but obviously could be any and it would be unfair to overly generalize.

### **Q. How much of a preparation effort is it going to be for a recent PMI-PBA certified BA to jump to CBAP? Go through the BABOK and some sample tests maybe?**

#### **Q. I see you have the PMI-PBA; how do you think it compares to the CBAP?**

A. While CBAP and PMI-PBA both cover business analysis, they do so with distinct lenses. The CBAP if focuses exclusively on business analysis. The PBA is about business analysis too, but for now includes some project management-type questions focused on risk and traceability. (CBAP covers traceability too of course). I'm not sure I'd ever recommend walking out of a PBA exam and into the CBAP. For sure you need to read and absorb the BABOK. Taking practice exams and questions will help.

### **Q. Are the CBAP questions the same difficulty as the PMP questions?**

A. That depends (sorry for that "consultant-like" answer.) I have heard the questions described as both harder and easier from successful CBAP candidates and believe it depends on a couple of factors. 1) If you have taken the PMP exam already, then you have experienced a lengthy, rigorous exam and know what to expect. 2) If you have more PM than BA experience, then in general the PMP will seem easier, and vice versa. 3) Depending on your experience, though, it might work against you.

Let's say you have your PMP then aim for the CBAP as I did. I felt more confident about my BA knowledge so did not study as much as I did for my PMP. That sense of over-confidence became clear when I sat for my exam and I realized the questions were harder than I thought. I passed, but felt the fear of failure as I was answering the questions. The key is to thoroughly prepare, and we recommend a goal of 100 hours of study to feel adequately prepared.

### **Q. What is the timeline for the end-to-end process? For example, I complete training, finish application, get approved and take the test? Are there time requirements?**

A. The main time constraint is the one year you must sit for your exam once your CBAP application is approved. Generally speaking, a sensible goal is to take your exam within 6 months of approval. If you follow our advice and devote 100 hours of study, that amounts to an average of 4 hours per week, which is quite manageable. Taking a class will reduce the remaining time needed to prepare.

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Six months gives you adequate study time and enough extra time left over in case you need to re-take your exam. Obviously, it's better to pass the first time, but I've heard more than a few stories about taking exams one week before the deadline. The extra anxiety you'll feel from the pressure to pass will not help your performance.

### **Q. What is different between Watermark Learning and other online training sites?**

A: There are several ways (and thanks for asking):

- 1) Our experience – we've provided both PMP and CBAP preparation longer than other vendors, plus we now offer prep support for CCBA, ECBA, PMI-PBA, and PMI-ACP.
- 2) We thoroughly understand bodies of knowledge like the BABOK and can effectively translate it to help you understand it. We've contributed to every release from 1.6 to 3.0, both as content providers and expert reviewers, which helps us explain the important concepts. It also gives you an edge using our exam questions with explanations for correct and incorrect answers and BABOK reference numbers to focus your study.
- 3) We offer a comprehensive solution that no other vendor does: a 35-hour CBAP prep class with live, virtual, and self-paced options, and includes our top-rated Study Guide, flash cards, study tables, and the best exam simulator available.
- 4) Responsive and supportive customer service.

## 2. CBAP Study Tips

### **Q. Ideal preparation time (in days or months) required to complete the CBAP certification?**

A. We recommend 100 hours of study time, which can be reduced if you take a class like our [CBAP Certification Prep class](#). The time you can devote to studying will determine how long that takes. Let's say you can spend 4-5 hours a week studying, then it will take approximately 6 months of studying.

### **Q. I started reading the BABOK just 2 days back. I went thru the first KA (Planning) and realized that I might be better off going thru the Techniques chapter first and then come back to the KA chapters (with good understanding of each technique that is being described). Does that make sense?**

A. Yes, that sounds like a good approach for you. There will be several questions on techniques on the CBAP exam, so they are a critical part of the BABOK to study. Another approach is to study each Knowledge Area and then study the techniques for each task. That provides some context for applying the techniques.

Let me emphasize that there are multiple approaches to studying the BABOK that work. One that probably doesn't work is to read it straight through unless you plan to use another resource to help you absorb it.

### **Q. I am due to write the certification in three months. Can you please suggest how I should go about preparing? Any tips would be helpful. I have no classroom training available here, so I am relying on resources I found on the internet.**

### **Q. My exam is 2 months away; any tips to focus exam prep please?**

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**Q. How did you prepare for CBAP?**

**Q. How many times do you recommend reading through the BABOK v3 study guide before sitting for the exam?**

A. The general approach we suggest for preparing for CBAP certification is: 1) Read the BABOK at least once, 2) Absorb it, and 3) Do practice questions. IIBA provides a free PDF of the BABOK when you become a member, which is wise. You receive a discount on your exam which more than pays for the membership. Here are some general tips:

- Use study tables to focus on and understand the big picture. [We sell a version](#) or you can create your own.
- Use flashcards to master the terminology (see previous question on flashcards). You can purchase ours or create your own. We have a template for creating flashcards on our [CBAP Certification Resources page](#).
- Join a study group if you have one available in your area. Or, find a study partner to team up with. [Let us know if you are interested](#) in this option.
- As you study, do practice questions for each Knowledge Area. Our [Online Study Exam](#) has drill to help you focus on one KA or other area like Techniques at a time. If your budget is tight, you should create your own practice questions or work with a study group or partner to test each other.
- And you get close to your exam, say the last few weeks, you should do practice simulations. They will give you a sense of what an entire 120-question exam is like, and you can time yourself. We provide unlimited simulations for practice using our exam simulator. There may be free simulators available on the internet.

**Q. I found I am having to memorize the tasks associated to the techniques. For example, I would think brainstorming could logically apply to analyze current state. Are there any other ways to make understanding this more logical?**

A. My question to you is: why do you feel a need to memorize the tasks for each technique? That is a difficult chore. My suggestion is to become familiar with each technique and have a general understanding of the techniques used by each task. If you still feel a need to memorize, then use some sort of table (Excel or pre-built) to help you associate tasks with techniques.

### 3. CBAP Materials

#### CBAP Exam Simulator and Questions

**Q. Is the interface of IIBA's exam similar to Watermark's (with flags, etc.)?**

A. Yes, the actual interface will be similar. You should be able to navigate back and forth through your exam, flag questions for review, and browse thru any of your unanswered questions. The latter is important since you should never leave any questions unanswered. Educated guesses will give you a chance of getting difficult questions correct, but leaving questions blank will ensure a wrong answer. [Our simulator](#) has a timer like the real exam so you can practice doing "speed tests" to gauge your pace for answering questions.

**Q. Does the format of the questions on Watermark reflect exactly the format of the questions on the exam? If not, what are the differences?**

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A. We can't say exactly, but we are very close. IIBA uses an exam methodology based on Bloom's taxonomy, providing a clear structure for writing questions and answers. Our exam creators have all taken a variety of IIBA and PMI exams, so we know the "tenor and tone" of how they are constructed. With over 10 years of experience with CBAP preparation, we have refined our abilities to create effective practice questions. The [feedback we receive from successful candidates](#) is our best indicator of how close we are.

**Q. In the sample exams, I always struggle to differentiate when a scenario is referring to Strategy Analysis or Solution Evaluation. Any tips on how to do this?**

A. A brief answer is to remember that Strategy Analysis deals with strategizing and defining a change in response to a business need. Solution Evaluation is about assessing a constructed solution or portion of one to see how well the solution addresses a need.

**Q. I've heard CBAP v3 exam is only about case studies and scenarios. At the same time, your CBAP simulation exam still has definition-based questions. Can you please elaborate why?**

A. Only partially true. We have been told there are three types of questions on the v3 CBAP exam with rough estimates of their percentages: 1) Case studies (30-40%), 2) Scenarios (30-40%), and 3) Knowledge-based recall questions (20-30%). BTW, our exam simulator contains all three types to approximate these.

Another important reason we include definition-type questions is to help you learn and absorb BABOK terminology and concepts. The knowledge-based questions in our Study Exam are not solely intended to mimic the real exam. Instead, they will build your knowledge and confidence to answer the more difficult scenario and case study questions.

### **Study Guide and Flashcards**

**Q. Are the simulation exams included within the Study Guide?**

A. Not within our [CBAP Certification Study Guide](#), but you have online access to them. Because of the added length of BABOK 3, our Study Guide expanded to match it. To keep the size manageable, we removed our simulated exam from the v3 Guide. We felt you would be better served by having access to unlimited simulations with the free trial subscription to our Study Exam during your trial period.

**Q. I bought your handbook and I see most questions are more scenario-based and no case study questions.**

A. We provide several case studies in our Online Study Exam, and you can access them during your free trial when you purchase our Study Guide. We felt this would give you better practice than including only one or two in our Guide.

**Q. Are the BABOK Flashcards definition only or are they also directly related to test questions?**

A. Definitions only. The [BABOK Flashcards](#) will help you master BABOK terminology, which in turn helps you differentiate between correct and incorrect answers. For example, mastering terminology will help you choose

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the right answer when faced with two close answers such as “Business Analysis Approach” vs. “Business Analysis Plan.” (Hint: there is no “BA Plan” in the BABOK even if you use this kind of artifact in your work.) There may be a few recall questions based on definitions, but we recommend using the flashcards to solidify your knowledge and build your confidence.

### 4. CBAP Exam

**Q. In the CBAP exam, are there any direct questions from BABOK, similar to the v2 version?**

A. There are a small percentage of questions like this, smaller than in the v2 exam. See the question about “case studies and scenarios” elsewhere in the Guide.

**Q. Will CBAP score be shown immediately after exam?**

A. Yes, you will know immediately if you passed or not. Plus, you will get feedback on which Knowledge Areas you were above average, average, and below average compared to other examinees. This feedback is helpful in case you need to re-take your exam.

**Q. Do we have questions on tools & guidelines, perspective, core concept, elements, management theories (theory X)?**

**Q. How important is "Perspectives," which is added newly in v3?**

**Q. Does BABOK v3 include the agile part or do we still have to study for the Agile supplement provided separately? Do I need to give the Agile extension the same importance?**

A. You will have questions on all of these except none on Perspectives and none on the Agile Extension. The management theory you mention is an example of underlying competencies and you will be tested on a few of these.

**Q. Some techniques may require some calculations, does the exam include that type of questions?**

**Q. In what competencies are the calculations?**

**Q. How many formulas will I need to know, and which?**

A. We have reports from successful CBAP candidates that they have had to perform calculations on their exams. We have not asked which ones, since doing so would violate our Code of Conduct as an IIBA EEP. Our recommendation is to memorize some of the basic financial formulas like ROI, but not the complicated ones like Net Present Value. We also suggest memorizing the formula for PERT estimates, since it is straight-forward and widely known. Our Online Study Exam has some calculations like the ones I just described.

**Q. For CBAP, should I focus on 6 Knowledge areas alone? Anything else from BABOK?**

**Q. Do I need to be thorough with UC & Introduction, as I am with KA and Techniques?**

A. You would be wise to start with the 6 Knowledge Areas (KAs), but you also need to study chapters 1 and 2 (introductory and key concepts), chapter 9 – Underlying Competencies, and chapter 10 – Techniques. We hear reports that there are many techniques questions on the exam. Make sure you study those well and if you are short on time, spend less of it on chapters 1, 2, and 9.



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### **Q. What are the important Techniques I should focus on?**

A. The techniques are challenging, since you will receive many questions on them. There are 50 techniques and we can't imagine you will be tested on all of them. I always recommend focusing on the ones most widely referred to in the BABOK. Appendix B in that Guide has a handy cross-reference table called "Techniques to Task Mapping." Use it to see which techniques are the most common. For example, the first technique, "Acceptance and Evaluation Criteria" is referenced 9 times in the BABOK while the second two techniques are each referred to only twice. That doesn't mean you won't be tested on them, but it is a way to focus your study time by studying the higher-referenced techniques.

You should also consider spending the most time studying the techniques you are least familiar with. That will help you start learning them (beneficial by itself) and reduce your risk in case you are tested on them.

### **Q. The Guidelines and Tools section seems disorganized. There's no place to look up the definition of them, and only about half are Outputs from tasks. But this seems to come up a lot in the sample questions. Is there an approach to doing well on them on the exam?**

A. You raise a challenging issue. Some of the Guidelines are actually outputs from other tasks as you indicate. I would focus on those first. Speaking of tasks, Inputs and Outputs are typically not optional for them, unlike Guidelines and Tools. Because of that I would focus on understanding Inputs and Outputs more so than Guidelines and Tools.

### **Q. BABOK V 3.0 has 50 elicitation techniques and they are used for various tasks across Knowledge Areas. For CBAP certification, are we supposed to memorize each technique with respect to where it is used?**

A. Not exactly. First, not all techniques are elicitation techniques. Second, it is more important to understand the techniques themselves and details about them such as terminology, diagram details if any, and last why and where a technique is used. For the latter, I would focus on generalities such as Estimation being used for planning and Data Modeling for analyzing requirements.

### **Q. What is the breakdown weight of each knowledge area on the exam?**

A. We list the exam blueprints for all IIBA exams (CBAP, CCBA, and ECBA) on our [CBAP FAQs page](#).

### **Q. Does the exam center allow you to bring in a white board to write notes on?**

### **Q. Can you use paper to write stuff down during the exam?**

A. No, the exam center supplies you with a white board and markers. You can write on that during the exam. You can't use paper and pencil, since my guess is they want to guard against people walking out with notes on the exam.

### **Q. Are we lucky enough to have pause timer facility in the actual exam as well?**

A. No, sorry! We provide that on our Study Exam as a preparation help. When your exam starts the timer keeps going.

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**Q. On the website of the exam center, there is an indication that an exam taker is not allowed to bring anything at the exam including food and water. At the same time, you are implying that we can bring some snack and water. Are you positive on food and water statement?**

A. My experience was that I could bring a snack and water and was able to stow them in a locker outside the exam room. Make sure you check with your exam center to find out their rules. They have gotten stricter over the years, so it is possible you are prevented from bringing anything to the exam even if it is stored in a locker.

### 5. CBAP Application

**Q. Do I need to complete a training before I fill out the Education Hours of the application?**

**Q. I was wondering if the training had to be PDU hours or could I use the CDU hours?**

**Q. Are there any restrictions on the professional development training requirement?**

A. Yes, your 35 BA education (professional development or PD) hours need to be complete before you can finish your application. Bear in mind the training must be BA-related, and “close calls” such as Six Sigma or CSPO Certification won’t count. You also cannot include PDU/CDU activities such as webinars, conferences, articles, etc. You will need CDUs for re-certification, but not for initial qualification for the CBAP (or CCBA or ECBA for that matter).

**Q. Can you elaborate on the 2 recommendations to be submitted? Is it mandatory that our current manager needs to fill the application? What if, in those cases, we don’t want our manager to know we are upgrading our skills?**

**Q. What if my reference is my project manager with PMP?**

A. Your CBAP references can be your career manager, a customer of yours, or another CBAP. I find it interesting you would need to hide your pursuit of a CBAP from your manager, but I don't know your situation. If your project manager is your career manager (not always the case), then they can be your reference.

**Q. When filling out the application and listing projects, are we supposed to post projects from most recent to the oldest worked on?**

**Q. On the application for certification, can I add projects whose end dates will go past the time I take the test?**

**Q. When completing the application, does the “Your Role” field always have to be Business Analyst, or can it be Business SME or Tester?**

A. Yes, IIBA requests that you list projects in reverse order, newest to oldest. I would recommend you list your role as “BA” and only include hours spent doing BA tasks. If your role was as an SME or tester, you should not include those projects. If you had multiple roles, only list the hours spent doing BA work.

**Q. I've heard IIBA's application process for CBAP is pretty strict. Do applications happen to get denied or asked for more info?**

**Q. Is the application audit random or do they review each application and pick ones for audit?**



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**Q. Is there a sample tracking sheet available where the six knowledge areas are provided - something that would facilitate tracking the 7500 hours prior to registering for the test?**

A. IIBA has made the application process simpler and we think easier with version 3. That said, they are strict with the requirements of 7500 BA hours, 35 hours of PD, two references, etc. They may need to ask for clarifications or more information

We have a [tracking worksheet available](#) that you can download and use to list your hours. It has many handy calculations, including a way to see if you meet the 900-hour requirement and the overall 7500-hour requirement.

**Q. Regarding the application process, I paid for my application and instantly got an email stating my application is APPROVED. (No wait or lead time.) As for the next step, I believe I need to pay the exam fee. Does that have any sort of processing time or do I expect an instant "Go ahead and schedule" email once I pay the exam fee?**

A. You should be able to schedule your exam instantly once your application is approved. If anyone knows differently, please leave a comment!

**Q. I registered for IIBA membership 1 month back by choosing location as India and paid 55 USD for membership. However, I am in projects and right now travelling between Australia and the US. Do I have to take the exam in India because I registered with my India address or can I take the exam anywhere with the same membership?**

A. A good question and one I don't know the policy – please check with IIBA for the answer.

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That completes our FAQs received so far. Did the questions or our answers prompt even more questions? Do you need clarification on anything? [Please visit our blog](#) and leave your questions/comments there and we will respond. If you want additional information on CBAP certification or the ways we can help, please visit [www.WatermarkLearning.com/CBAP](http://www.WatermarkLearning.com/CBAP). Best wishes on achieving your own CBAP dreams and goals!

If you want to join our monthly chats to get your questions answered, please [visit our Events page](#) for further details. Best wishes on achieving your own CBAP dreams and goals!

### About Watermark Learning

Since 1992, Watermark Learning has delivered training, coaching, and certification preparation in business analysis, project management, agile, business relationship management, business process management, and leadership & influencing skills. We turn the complexity of industry standards into practical application. Our courses and coaching are laser-focused to help ensure enduring results in organizations. Our services are practical and engaging, led by experts who facilitate sessions in an interactive way making learners energized to learn and motivated to perform. We are large enough to meet your needs and small enough to care.

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