SHRM Certification Eligibility Criteria

SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP®)

The SHRM-CP certification is intended for individuals that perform general HR/HR-related duties; or for currently enrolled students and individuals pursuing a career in Human Resource Management.

Candidates for the SHRM-CP certification are not required to hold an HR title and do not need a degree or previous HR experience to apply; however, a basic working knowledge of HR practices and principles or a degree from an Academically Aligned program is recommended.

The SHRM-CP exam is designed to assess the competency level of HR at the operational level. This level includes implementing policies, supporting day-to-day HR functions, or serving as an HR point of contact for staff and stakeholders.

Refer to the SHRM BASK® for detailed information on proficiency standards for this credential (i.e., Proficiency Indicators only For All HR Professionals).

SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP®)

The SHRM-SCP certification is for individuals that have a work history of at least 3 years performing strategic level HR/HR-related duties; or for SHRM-CP credential holders who have held the credential for at least 3 years and are working in, or are in the process of transitioning to, a strategic level role.

Candidates for the SHRM-SCP certification are not required to hold an HR title and do not need a degree to apply.

The SHRM-SCP exam is designed to assess the competency level of those who engage in HR work at the strategic level. Work at this level includes duties such as developing HR policies and/or procedures, overseeing the execution of integrated HR operations, directing an entire HR enterprise, or leading the alignment of HR strategies to organizational goals.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they devoted at least 1,000 hours per calendar year (Jan. – Dec.) to strategic level HR/HR-related work.

- More than 1,000 hours in a calendar year does not equate to more than 1 year of experience.
- Part-time work qualifies as long as the 1,000-hour per calendar year standard is met.
- Experience may be either salaried or hourly.

Individuals who are HR consultants may demonstrate qualifying experience through the HR/HR-related duties they perform for their clients. Contracted hours must meet the 1,000-hour standard.

Eligibility vs. Experience

If you meet the eligibility criteria for the SHRM-SCP but the self-assessment tool suggests the SHRM-CP exam due to limited experience in strategic roles, you face a challenging decision.

Historically, many HR professionals with non-strategic backgrounds who attempted the SHRM-SCP exam were unsuccessful. That's why SHRM recommends individuals with this background start at the SHRM-CP level.

The SHRM-CP certification, with its operational focus, may align better with your career history. Additionally, taking the SHRM-CP exam first acquaints you with the exam structure, question format, and overall test experience, enhancing your study methods.

Opting for the SHRM-CP initially is particularly beneficial if you have test anxiety or have been away from academic settings for some time. It also boosts your confidence for future attempts at the SHRM-SCP exam.