

Certifications for Research Administrators

December 14, 2021



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

Office of Research and
Economic Development

Overview

- Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC)
- Formed in 1993 as an independent non-profit organization
- <http://www.cra-cert.org>



What are the Benefits?

- Knowledge/Skills development/competency
 - Build credibility (for you, your department, MSU)
 - Demonstrates expertise and commitment
 - Professional recognition
 - Personal satisfaction
 - Increased opportunities for employment
 - Advancement opportunities
 - Salary incentive
 - Serve as a role model to others
- *The Body of Knowledge is comprehensive for our profession.



Types of Certifications

- CRA – Certified Research Administrator
- CPRA – Certified Pre-award Administrator
- CFRA – Certified Financial Research Administrator



Details on CRA Exam

- Maximum of 250 multiple choice questions
- Total testing time of 4 hours
- The exam is weighted in approximately the following manner:
 1. Collection and Dissemination of Information – 44%
 2. Legal Requirements and Sponsor Interface – 20%
 3. Financial Management – 21%
 4. General Management – 15%



Details on CPRA Exam

- Maximum of 250 multiple choice questions
- Total testing time of 4 hours
- The exam is weighted in approximately the following manner:
 1. Research Partnership and Funding – 25%
 2. Project Development and Proposal Submission – 30%
 3. Budget Design and Development – 30%
 4. Awards and Pre-Award Compliance Considerations – 15%



Details on CFRA Exam

- Maximum of 250 multiple choice questions
- Total testing time of 4 hours
- The exam is weighted in approximately the following manner:
 1. Governing Framework – 25%
 2. Project Costs – 35%
 3. Reporting – 25%
 4. Fiscal Compliance – 15%



Proof in Numbers

- CRA
 - 3266 total
 - 37 in Mississippi
 - 20 at MSU
- CPRA
 - 128 total
 - 4 in Mississippi
 - 1 at MSU
- CFRA
 - 140 total
 - 0 in Mississippi



MSU's Certificants

- Brandy Akers, ORED
- Schanna Beckham, College of Business
- Criss Bell, CAVS
- Christy Bischoff, CAVS
- LaDonna Bullman, FWRC
- Nicole Cobb, ORCS
- Kevin Enroth, OSP
- Penny French, OSP
- Shauncey Hill, Internat. Institute/CVM
- Stephanie Hyche, ORD
- Sheri Johnson, Carl Small Town Center
- Tina Kinard*, OSP
- MaryAnn Latham, MAFES
- Dana Lewis, Chemical Engineering
- LeLe Newell, OSP
- Blair Reed, ORD
- Mary Ann Richardson, CAVS-Extension
- Kacey Strickland, ORCS
- Cheryl Woody, CAVS
- Jerri Wright, Aerospace Engineering



Who is Eligible?

- Bachelor's degree or advanced degree and 3 years of professional experience in research or sponsored programs administration

OR

- Associate's degree and 5 years of professional experience in research or sponsored programs administration

OR

- No degree and 6 years of professional experience in research or sponsored programs administration (requires a petition application)



How Do I Become Certified?

- All exams are offered twice a year during a two-week window:
 - CRA – May and November
 - CPRA – February and August
 - CFRA – March and September
- Registration deadline is at least 30 days prior to the testing window
- \$395 Fee*
 - many MSU offices will cover this cost and/or ORED has offered support, as well.



Before the Test

- Logistics
 - Registration (consider mailing address and location)
 - Testing centers (think about when you are at your best!)
 - Covid policies?
 - Computer-based testing
- Test Prep
 - **Body of Knowledge**
 - Handbook and sample questions
 - Practice test (\$)
 - Format and organization of test and questions
 - Resources for prep



How do I start preparing?

- RACC handbooks and structured review sessions
- Study the RACC **Body of Knowledge**
- Research the links within the Body of Knowledge
- Form study groups
- Quizlet
- Practice tests (via RACC, etc.)
- NCURA and SRAI Workshops and Conferences
- ORED Seminars
- Agency Websites & federal sources, like eCFR, FDP, PHS/EDGAR, etc.



A few specific resources

- RACC's current campaign
 - [Jan 7, 2022 12:00 PM Central Time](#)
 - [Feb 11, 2022 09:00 AM Mountain Time](#)
 - [Mar 14, 2022 01:00 PM Pacific Time](#)
- The New School – [Research Administrator Development Series](#)
- The [Federal Demonstration Partnership](#)
- View archived recordings of webinars/conferences/programs
- [RESAdmin listserv](#)



Day of Test/During the Test

- Test center rules
 - Nothing goes in with you
 - Others may be testing for different organizations
 - Timed test; does not “pause” for breaks
 - Climate (layers!!!)
- Computer-based testing
 - Skip feature
 - Leave nothing unanswered
 - Eliminate wrong answers/select “best” answer



After the Test

- Results mailed after 4-6 weeks (ish)
 - If successful, certificate and pin also mailed
- Recertification processes
 - 5 years
 - Must submit evidence of 80 contact hours
 - Submit 3 questions for future tests
 - Fee
 - Continued employment in field
 - Random audit of documents
 - Can also re-take the test



Some Tips from Experience!

- How do you learn best? (auditory, visually, etc.)
- Organizing a study group
- Find free stuff!
- Are you a “binder” person?
- Train yourself for “trick” questions
- Know the jargon and acronyms!
- Spend most time on what you don’t do daily!

