Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC)

Study Guide

April 2016

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL
Technical Communicator

CPTC™

FOUNDATION

Society for Technical Communication

APMG International
Accrediting Professionals

CPTC Foundation Syllabus

CPTC Foundation Candidate Guidance

Additional CPTC Information

1.   Introduction

This syllabus is based on the 5th edition of *Technical Communication Today* by Richard Johnson-Sheehan, issued in 2015 by Pearson Education ("the Text").

The primary purpose of the syllabus is to provide a basis for accreditation of people involved with technical communication. It documents the learning outcomes and describes the scope of the requirements a candidate is expected to meet to demonstrate that these learning outcomes have been achieved at the Foundation qualification level.

The target audience for this document is potential CPTC Foundation candidates.

This syllabus informs the design of the exams and provides accredited training organizations with a more detailed breakdown of what the exams will assess. Details on the exam structure and content are documented in the CPTC Foundation Design.

2.   Foundation Qualification

2.1.   Purpose of the Foundation Qualification

The purpose of the Foundation qualification is to measure whether a candidate has sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the *Technical Communication Today* text to act as an informed member of a technical writing or a technical communication team within their professional work or in their organization.

2.2.   Target Audience

All individuals who are involved in technical communication and informational projects or products, who require a working knowledge of the key principles of technical communication, and who need to know the terminology used and some of the theory behind the practice.

The CPTC Foundation qualification is complementary to all APMG disciplines. It is particularly relevant to those qualifications where the preparation of proposals, technical specifications, technical documentation, activity reports or analytical reports is an important element of the qualification.

2.3.   High-Level Performance Definition of a Successful Foundation Candidate

The successful candidate should be able to recall, recognize, and demonstrate comprehension of the theories, concepts, models, genres, and approaches outlined in 9 key areas. Specifically (s)he should be able to:

Project Planning
- Describe strategic planning in a technical communication context.
- Describe the writing process and how this and genres guide the planning of the team's work.
- Explain the importance of tracking the progress of the team's work and how specific technical genres can help with this.

Project Analysis
- Explain how to develop a reader profile and the implications of working with global audiences.
- Discuss how to map information needs to the audience.
- Discuss how to analyze the context in which readers will use an information product.

Content Development
- Describe the function of technical communication genres.
- Describe the steps and explain the activities typically undertaken in a good technical communication research process.
- Explain the importance of copyright laws as applied to print and electronic documents.
- Discuss methods of primary and secondary research and how and why sources are documented.

Organizational Design
- Discuss how patterns of arrangement can help you organize information logically.
- Explain how to use genres to outline and organize documents.

Written Communication
- Explain the guidelines for writing plain sentences and paragraphs.
- Explain when and how to use plain and persuasive styles.
- Explain rhetorical moves for writing content for introductions, body sections, and conclusions.
- Discuss the writing guidelines for social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and other electronic media.

Visual Communication
- Explain the use of templates, symbols and visual styles in developing effective visual communication.
- Discuss the five design principles and how these are used, including adapting them for digital and electronic products.
- Discuss special considerations for designing visuals for a presentation.

Reviewing and Editing
- Describe the levels of editing and how they are applied to technical documents.
- Describe the different types of usability testing in the review process.
- Recall common proofreading practices.

Content management
- Describe the basic features of a website and how to set up and use websites in the workplace.
- Discuss techniques and practices of collaborative writing and content strategy.

Production Delivery
- Discuss the importance of checking final production deliverables against project outcomes and how this is approached.

3. Assessment Model

Each learning outcome in the High-Level Performance Definition requires the candidate to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills. For each learning outcome a number of learning outcome measures have been identified. These are evaluated in the examination, in accordance with the Examination Design, to confirm that the learning outcome has been achieved. These learning outcome measures are shown as syllabus topics and define the scope of the standard required to achieve the qualification.

A classification widely used when designing assessments for certification and education is Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. This classifies learning objectives into six ascending learning levels, each defining a higher degree of competencies and skills, (Bloom et al., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*,1956).

APMG have incorporated this into a Learning Outcomes Assessment Model that is then used to develop each qualification's Assessment Model. The model provides a simple and systematic means for assessing and classifying the learning outcome measures.

This structured approach helps to ensure:
- The appropriate level is identified for a qualification.
- A clear delineation in learning level content between different qualifications.
- Wording is standardized and syllabi are presented consistently across APMG's qualification portfolio.
- Exam questions and papers are consistent in their design.

The Foundation qualification examines at levels 1 (recall) and 2 (understand).

	1. Recall	2. Understand
APMG Learning Level Definition	*remember previously learned information*	*grasp the meaning and make sense of information*
Generic APMG Headers *For introducing the learning outcome measures (topics) in the Syllabus*	Recall terms and key facts about concepts, principles, and procedures from the reference material	Understand key facts, concepts, principles, and procedures from the reference material
Qualification Example	Recall terms and key facts relating to the syllabus area	Understand key concepts, strategies, guidelines, principles, activities and techniques relating to the syllabus area

4. Qualification Scope

The definition of scope for each qualification is presented in the syllabus tables at the end of this document. Each syllabus area is a unit of learning that relates to the reference material or training course module.

The following syllabus areas are identified:

Syllabus Area Code	Syllabus Area Title
PP	Project Planning and Technical Communications
PA	Project Analysis and Developing a Reader Profile
CD	Content Development
OD	Organizational Design
WC	Written Communication
VC	Visual Communication
RE	Reviewing and Editing
CM	Content Management
PD	Production and Delivery

5. Syllabus Presentation

For each syllabus area the learning outcome measures are presented in order of learning level and are introduced by a standard header. There is only one header at each learning level for each syllabus area. The wording in this header is derived from the Assessment Model. Each measure is specific to a learning level.

The scope of each examination is shown by a tick in the respective column to the right of the topic description.

Each of the syllabus areas is presented in a similar format as follows:

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Syllabus Area Code

PA [2]</td>
<td>Syllabus Area :

<i>STC Syllabus Area:</i> Project Analysis [1]</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Understand the concepts, guidelines and techniques used when developing a reader profile. : [3]
Specifically to identify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01
[4]</td>
<td>01
[5]</td>
<td>[6] Why and how reader profiles are used:
1. Their importance for technical communications
2. The three steps for creating a reader profile</td>
<td>[7]
✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</table>

Key to the Syllabus Area table

1	Syllabus Area	Unit of learning, e.g. course module, key activity area or section of the reference guide.
2	Syllabus Area Code	A unique 2 character code identifying the syllabus area.
3	Learning Level Header	Header introducing the syllabus topics *(learning outcome measures)* for a given learning level..
4	Level	Learning level of the learning outcome measure..
5	Topic Reference	Number of the topic within the learning level.
6	Topic Description *(Learning Outcome Measure*)	Precise and specific description of what is required of the candidate to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.
7	Foundation/Practitioner	Shows at which qualification level the topic **is assessed**. **Note: A measure is only applied at one qualification level.**

Syllabus Area Code PP		Syllabus Area : **Project Planning and Technical Communications**
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about planning and managing the work of technical communication teams **Specifically to recall:**		
01	01	The five stages of the technical writing process and how they are followed: • Planning and Researching • Organizing and Drafting • Improving Style • Designing • Revising and Editing
Understand the key concepts and techniques used when planning and managing the work of technical communication teams **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	How to strategically plan the work of a technical communications team and the sequence in which they are undertaken, specifically: 1. Setting objectives 2. Creating a task list 3. Developing a timeline
02	02	The importance of tracking progress and how activity reports, specifically progress and status reports can help with this

Syllabus Area Code PA		Syllabus Area : **Project Analysis and Developing a Reader Profile**
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about the concepts and techniques for developing a reader profile. **Specifically to recall:**		

01	01	Key facts about readers and reader profiles
		  1. What a reader profile is
		  2. The names of the four types of readers
		     • Primary
		     • Secondary
		     • Tertiary
		     • Gatekeepers

01	02	The rhetorical situation and how readers and context is defined:
		  1. The four elements of the rhetorical situation
		  2. Three aspects that determine how readers make decision
		     • Needs
		     • Values
		     • Attitudes
		  3. Four contexts of document use
		     • Physical
		     • Economic
		     • Political
		     • Ethical

01	03	How to work with global audience
		  1. The five helpful strategies
		  2. Four aspects of a document that may need to be adjusted

Understand the concepts, guidelines and techniques used when developing a reader profile. **Specifically to identify:**		

02	01	Why and how reader profiles are used:
		  1. Their importance for technical communications
		  2. The three steps for creating a reader profile

02	02	How to identify readers:
		  1. The role of each of the four types of readers
		  2. The guidelines on readability and readers' preferences

02	03	The techniques used when developing a reader profile:
		  1. How reader analysis is used to identify readers' needs, values, and attitudes
		  2. How context analysis is used to identify the contexts in which readers use documents

Syllabus Area Code CD		Syllabus Area : Content Development
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about developing the content of information products **Specifically to recall:**		
01	01	What technical genres are and how they are used
01	02	The sources used for research and the different kinds of evidence 1. The different types of primary and secondary sources of evidence 2. The three kinds of evidence solid research draws on: • Electronic • Print • Empirical
Understand the concepts, activities and techniques used when developing the content of information products **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	The types of communication situation each technical genre is typically used for and its typical content: 1. Letter, Memos and E-mail 2. Technical Descriptions and Specifications 3. Instructions and Documentation 4. Proposals 5. Activity Reports 6. Analytical Reports
02	02	How to define the research subject, specifically the use of: 1. Concept maps 2. Angles
02	03	How to formulate research questions
02	04	How to develop a research methodology, specifically: 1. The activities involved: • Mapping out a Methodology • Describing a Methodology • Using and Revising Your Methodology 2. The use of Concept maps to sketch out the methodology
02	05	What empirical evidence is
02	06	The importance of triangulation
02	07	How to appraise evidence to ensure its reliability
02	08	How sources are documented, specifically: 1. When sources should be cited and the advantages of doing this 2. The use of in-text citations and a References list 3. The availability and use of different citation styles
02	09	The concepts of: 1. Copyright 2. Trademarks and how laws for protecting intellectual property in the digital age are evolving

Syllabus Area Code		Syllabus Area :
OD		**Organizational Design**
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about the organization and drafting of information products **Specifically to recall:**		

01	01	Introduction of a document
		    1. The six opening moves
		    2. How to organise the opening moves

01	02	The major patterns of arrangement for the body of a document and how they are used
01	03	The five closing moves in a conclusion

01	04	Typical patterns for organising each of the six technical genres:
		    1. Letter, Memos and E-mail
		    2. Technical Descriptions and Specifications
		    3. Instructions and Documentation
		    4. Proposals
		    5. Activity Reports
		    6. Analytical Reports

Understand the concepts and techniques used when organizing and drafting information products **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	*Note: Not used for the Foundation qualification*

Syllabus Area Code WC	Syllabus Area: **Written Communication**	
Level	Topic	

Recall key terms and facts about composing content and communicating in the written form
Specifically to recall:

01	01	Key facts about writing plain sentences: 1. The eight guidelines for writing plain sentences 2. The four types of sentences used in paragraphs
01	02	Key facts about the different writing styles 1. When it is appropriate to use plain writing style 2. When it is appropriate to use persuasive writing style 3. The differences between the plain and persuasive writing styles 4. The four persuasion techniques: • Elevate the tone • Use similes and analogies • Use metaphors • Change the pace
01	03	The writing strategies for improving the style and design of websites 1. The four strategies for improving the writing style on websites and why these are useful: • Keep sentences short • Keep paragraphs short • Links should reflect titles • Create a consistent tone 2. The writing strategies for improving the readability of websites for global audiences

Understand the concepts, strategies, guidelines and techniques used when composing content and communicating in the written form
Specifically to identify:

02	01	How to use the strategies for writing plain paragraphs: 1. Using the four types of sentences 2. Aligning sentence subjects in a paragraph 3. Using the "given/new" method
02	02	How to use each of the four persuasion techniques: 1. Elevate the tone 2. Use Similes and Analogies 3. Use Metaphor 4. Change the Pace

Syllabus Area Code VC		Syllabus Area : **Visual Communication**
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about visual communication principles and practices **Specifically to recall:**		
01	01	Key facts about visual design: 1. The five principles of visual design 2. Why good visual design is important for technical communication 3. The four different visual design considerations for culturally shallow documents
01	02	The four guidelines for using graphics in documents
01	03	The special considerations that apply when working with visuals in a presentation: • Choosing formats • Choosing fonts • Using graphics
Understand the principles and practices used when creating visual communications **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	The visual design principle of balance 1. How it is it is used to enhance readability of information products 2. How to use page grids to create a balanced layout
02	02	The visual design principle of alignment how it is used to add visual structure to information products
02	03	The visual design principle of grouping and how it is used to add visual structure to information products
02	04	The visual design principle of consistency and how it is used to enhance the readability of information products
02	05	The visual design principle of contrast and how it is used to enhance the readability of information products
02	06	How to visually design for global audiences: 1. Culturally deep design considerations 2. Culturally shallow design considerations 3. The guidelines for using symbols
02	07	How to use graphics appropriately. Specifically for each graphic type, how data is displayed and what the graphic is best used for: 1. Line 2. Bar chart 3. Table 4. Pie chart 5. Flow chart 6. Gantt chart
02	08	When to use pictures and drawings in technical communications.
02	09	The factors influencing the choice of presentation technology

Syllabus Area Code RE		Syllabus Area : Reviewing and Editing
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about the reviewing and editing of information products **Specifically to recall:**		

01	01	Key facts about editing a document:
		  1. The names of the four levels of editing
		  2. How to determine the appropriate level of edit for a document

01	02	The importance of:
		  1. Document cycling
		  2. Usability testing

01	03	Key facts about usability testing:
		  1. The types of usability testing used in evaluating technical writing products
		  2. The four questions used to help design usability tests

01	04	The common copyediting symbols and what they mean
Understand the concepts and guidelines used when reviewing and editing information products **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	The focus of Level 1 editing: revising and the guidelines to apply
02	02	The focus of Level 2 editing: substantive editing and the guidelines to apply
02	03	The focus of level 3 editing: copyediting and the guidelines to apply
02	04	The focus of level 4 editing: proofreading and the guidelines to apply

02	05	How different usability tests are conducted:
		  1. Read-and-Locate
		  2. Understandability tests
		  3. Performance tests
		  4. Safety tests

02	06	The common grammatical errors found in technical documents
02	07	The guidelines for creating and editing global technical documents (according to Leininger and Yuan)

Syllabus Area Code CM	Syllabus Area : Content Management	
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about team communication and collaboration, and managing the content of information products **Specifically to recall:**		
01	01	The four stages of forming a work team and their sequence (according to Tuckman).

01	02	Key facts about writing for websites:
		    1. The basic features of a website and how they are navigated by the reader
		    2. The guidelines for determining the number of levels needed in a website

01	03	The different types of websites used in the workplace and what they are the commonly used for:
		    1. Social networks
		    2. Wikis
		    3. Blogs
		    4. Microblogs
		    5. Video and podcasts

Understand the concepts, principles and techniques used when communicating and collaborating in teams, and managing the content of information products **Specifically to identify:**		

02	01	The five techniques that are commonly used for generating new ideas:
		    1. Logical mapping
		    2. Brainstorming
		    3. Freewriting
		    4. Outlining/Boxing
		    5. Journalist's questions

02	02	Understand how to set up and use in the workplace:
		    1. Websites
		    2. Blogs and microblogs
		    3. Social Networks

02	03	How to work collaborate effectively in technical writing teams:
		    1. The responsibilities of each of the four typical roles in a technical writing team
		    2. What happens to collaborative technical writing teams in each of the different stages of Tuckman's team building process
		    3. The strategies for managing successful virtual collaborations
		    4. How to improve the quality on a collaborative writing team
		        a. quality feedback loops
		        b. measuring outcomes against "metrics"
		        c. team performance reviews

Syllabus Area Code PD		Syllabus Area : Production and Delivery
Level	Topic	
Recall key terms and facts about the production and delivery of information products **Specifically to recall:**		
01	01	*No topics currently for this learning level*
Understand the concepts and techniques used when producing and delivering information products **Specifically to identify:**		
02	01	The importance of outcomes and deliverables for production and delivery. Specifically: 1. The relationship between project outcomes and final production deliverables 2. The importance of setting objectives for deliverables to effectively measure outcomes

FOUNDATION EXAM CANDIDATE GUIDANCE

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The objective of the examination is to enable you to demonstrate an understanding of the Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC™) theories, concepts, models, genres, and approaches used in technical communication. The Foundation exam uses objective test questions, which require you to choose a response to a question from a set of choices, for which the correct answer is pre-determined.

1.2   The following paragraphs explain the format of the question papers, and the different styles of question asked. Some suggestions on how to approach answering the various styles of question are also included.

2.   STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

The examination paper consists of:

2.1   A Question Booklet that contains 50 questions. Each question covers a different syllabus topic and is worth 1 mark. The pass mark is 35.

2.2   The Answer Sheet on which your answers must be given. There will only ever be **one correct answer** to each question. If more than one answer is given in the answer sheet the response line will be void and will attract no marks. Marks are not subtracted for incorrect answers.

2.3   In addition to a paper exam, APMG also offers a similarly structured exam online (see page 19).

3.   CPTC SYLLABUS AREAS ADDRESSED

The exam consists of 50 questions in total that cover all areas of the CPTC Foundation syllabus. The full CPTC syllabus is the first section of this Study Guide.

4.   STYLES OF QUESTIONS

There are a number of different test styles used within the paper. All test styles are based on the selection of the correct answer from a choice of 4 options.

The test styles are:

4.1   **Standard**

How are point sentences used in a paragraph?

a) Used frequently to emphasize the message being conveyed
b) Placed up front to introduce a new topic
c) Positioned to create a link from one topic to the next
d) Used to paraphrase the paragraph's overall claim

4.2   **Negative**

Which is **NOT** a guideline for working with visuals in a presentation?

a) Keep the tables small and simple
b) Use lists instead of paragraphs and sentences
c) Use a variety of text alignments for graphics
d) Put five or fewer items on a slide

4.3 **Missing Word**

Identify the missing words in the following sentence.

An effective information graphic should [?] the written text, not replace it.

a) accentuate
b) enhance
c) reinforce
d) supplement

4.4 **Select (list)**

Which of the following are types of usability tests?

1. Read and locate
2. Surveying
3. Focus groups
4. Copyediting

a) 1, 2, 3

b) 1, 2, 4

c) 1 ,3 ,4

d) 2, 3, 4

4.5 **Select (evaluate)**

Which of the following statements about the five stages of the technical writing process are true?

1. When writing documents you will need to move back and forth iteratively among the stages
2. The second stage involves organizing and drafting

a) Only 1 is true
b) Only 2 is true
c) Both 1 and 2 are true
d) Neither 1 or 2 is true

4.6 **Sequence**

1. In what sequence do teams usually progress through Tuckman's four stages of team development?

1. Storming
2. Forming
3. Performing
4. Norming

a) 1, 2, 3, 4

b) 1, 4, 2, 3

c) 2, 1, 4, 3

d) 2, 3, 1, 4

5. TIME MANAGEMENT

The exam is 40 minutes in duration. You must manage your time in order to complete all questions. All questions should be attempted. For the paper exam, if you wish to write your answers on the question paper first, you must be aware of the additional time needed to transfer the answers to the Answer Sheet. Only answers correctly submitted on the Answer Sheet will contribute to the result.

No support material is permitted. This is a closed book exam.

6. USING THE ANSWER SHEET WITH THE PAPER EXAM

6.1 The Answer Booklet is read electronically and the results generated by computer. It is therefore essential that you follow the instructions given and mark your answers accordingly. Failure to do so may lead to delay and, in some cases, answers being void.

6.2 Record your candidate number in the footer at the bottom of the page and also in the 10 boxes at the top right. Fill in the associated ovals next to the 10 boxes as shown in the example below for candidate 2000235141.

6.3 Select your answers by filling in ovals that relate to your chosen response, e.g.

6.4 Fill the oval in **IN PENCIL**, **NOT PEN**. If a pen is used, the answers may not be marked.

Acceptable ways to complete the answer sheets are either:

⬤ completely filling in the oval or ⬤ drawing a line through the centre of the oval, ensuring between 80-100% is filled.

Any other method, including ticks or crosses, is not acceptable and may not be marked.

6.5 If you wish to change your answer during the exam, completely erase your original answer and mark your new answer. If there is more than one oval marked for an answer, the question will score zero.

6.6 Information about taking the online exam can be found in the next section of this Study Guide.

7. USING THE SAMPLE EXAM PAPER

APMG has developed a Sample Exam Paper to aid candidates in preparing for the examination. The full Sample Exam Paper is available to all candidates after registering and paying for the Foundation exam of the APMG website. Ten sample questions are included as part of this Study Guide.

Additional CPTC Information

1. CPTC Certifications

STC's CPTC is a three-tiered professional certification: Foundation, Practitioner, and Expert.

- The Foundation Professional Certification will focus on knowledge of the field. To achieve the Certified Professional Technical Communicator – Foundational designation, applicants will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of best practices in technical communication by passing a test.

- The Practitioner Professional Certification will demonstrate mastery of applying best practices and leading others in their use. The achievement of the Certified Professional Technical Communicator – Practitioner designation will be a test and an evaluation of work product.

- The Expert Professional Certification requirements will be similar to the previous CPTC program, requiring a set of work products and expert interviews. (Those who have already achieved a Certified Professional Technical Communicator designation under the old program will be automatically grandfathered into the Certified Professional Technical Communicator – Expert Certification level.)
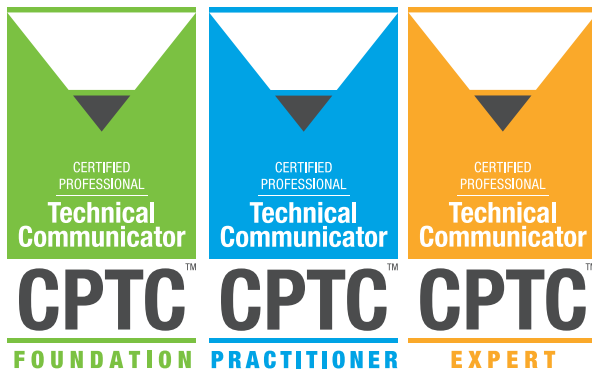
STC anticipates launching the Practitioner and Expert levels in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

2. Foundation Exam Information

There is two-tier pricing to take the exam: $250 for current STC members and $495 for nonmembers. This cost may be translated into other currencies such as the Euro at the rate applicable at the time. There is currently no discounted pricing for less-developed areas of the world. The Foundation level has no educational attainment or work experience requirement to sit the exam.

STC is working with a U.K.-based firm, APMG International, who specializes in professional certification administration, following ISO 17065 standards. The test is available online from APMG or through training organizations authorized by APMG. These trainers will combine a training session or sessions with administration of the Foundation exam. We anticipate it will take several months to develop a set of certification trainers.

Applicants may register and pay for the certification online at *http://www.apmg-international.com/en/qualifications/CPTC/CPTC.aspx*. Once an applicant has registered, he/she will have access to study documents and a sample exam. Potential applicants have one year from their registration date to take the online exam.

Online exams are administered through ProctorU. Detailed technical requirements and information about the online exam experience can be found at *http://www.proctoru.com/tech.php*.

3. ProctorU Pre-Exam Checklist

1. If this is your first exam with ProctorU, please visit www.proctoru.com/testitout to check your equipment before logging in. Be sure to close out any other webcam software before you visit the page.

2. Be sure you are in a well-lit, quiet and private room. The lighting of your room must be daylight quality and overhead lighting is preferred. If overhead lighting is not possible please make sure that your light source is not directly behind you because it will make it difficult for your proctor to see you.

3. Please have your photo ID ready.

4. Please bring a reflective surface such as a mirror. This is so you can show the edges of your monitor to your proctor.

5. Make sure your webcam, microphone and speakers are installed and working correctly.

6. Make sure your computer is in working order.

Once an applicant passes the test, he/she will be issued a certificate and entered into the STC certification database. His or her name will also appear on the STC and APMG websites under a list of current, certified practitioners. Certifications will be in good standing if a technical communicator keeps current with continuing education requirements.

Visit *http://www.apmg-international.com/en/qualifications/CPTC/CPTC.aspx* for more information or to sign up to take a self-study online exam through the APMG International website.

Additional information can be found online at *http://www.apmg-international.com/faq.aspx?category=Certified+Professional+Technical+Communicator+FAQs&btnSubmit=Open*.

4. SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE CPTC FOUNDATION EXAM

This section provides sample questions from the CPTC Foundation exam. The sample questions show the range of topics from 9 core skill areas in technical communication and the types of questions that will be asked. The rationale and correct responses for the questions are located at the bottom of this page. All questions are based on material found in the body of knowledge used for the exam, Richard Johnson-Sheehan's textbook *Technical Communication Today*, 5th ed. (ISBN-10: 0134419391).

10 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What is an editor on a technical communication team typically responsible for?
   a) Maintaining a document schedule and meeting minutes
   b) Collecting information and coordinating empirical research
   c) Evaluating missing content areas and how information is organized
   d) Document layout, images, and information graphics

2. Which of the following statements are correct guidelines for writing plain sentences?
   1. Use the doer as the subject of the sentence
   2. Write sentences that are breathing length
   3. Eliminate nominalizations
   4. Put the subject toward the end of the sentence
   a) 1, 2, 3
   b) 1, 2, 4
   c) 1, 3, 4
   d) 2, 3, 4

3. Which approach is **NOT** applying the visual design principle of grouping?
   a) Use borders to break the page into more manageable sections
   b) Offset the elements on a page to create a stable feeling in the text
   c) Use horizontal straight lines (rules) to signal places to pause in the document
   d) Use the whitespace appropriately to frame items on the page

4. Which of the following statements about the focus of substantive editing are true?
   1. The content should be checked for any gaps or digressions.
   2. The document should be designed for the target audience and the context of use.
   a) Only 1 is true
   b) Only 2 is true
   c) Both 1 and 2 are true
   d) Neither 1 or 2 is true

5. Which communication situation is **MOST** likely to use the technical genre of activity reports?
   a) Presenting an innovative idea to management for their consideration
   b) Presenting objective information on an ongoing issue and its future implications for the workplace
   c) Formally reporting findings from a study and making recommendations on the next steps
   d) Describing how to complete a workplace activity or process

6. Which is a factor for consideration when using symbols in documents for a global audience?
   a) Use of symbols can result in unintended consequences
   b) Symbols add little value to technical documents
   c) Shapes such as circles or squares are too simple to add any value
   d) Symbols can confuse readers of documents not in their first language

7. Which of the following are major patterns of arrangement for a section of a document?
   1. Cause and effect
   2. Chronological order
   3. Comparison and contrast
   4. Mandatory and optional
   a) 1, 2, 3
   b) 1, 2, 4
   c) 1, 3, 4
   d) 2, 3, 4

8. According to Johnson Sheehan, which of the following statements about project outcomes and deliverables are true?
   1. Project outcomes are the visible and measurable results of the team's efforts.
   2. Deliverables are the real products or services that you will deliver to clients upon a project's completion.
   a) Only 1 is true
   b) Only 2 is true
   c) Both 1 and 2 are true
   d) Neither 1 or 2 is true

9. Which of the following is **NOT** a benefit of using reader profiles for technical communication?
   a) Provides information on how readers will use the document
   b) Helps with the presentation of the same information to different audiences
   c) Provides a visual way of presenting ideas and understanding their logical relationships
   d) Helps determine suitable pattern of arrangements for the body of the document

10. When strategically planning the work of a technical documentation team, in what sequence are the following typically undertaken?
    1. Create a list of tasks
    2. Develop a timeline
    3. Set objectives
    a) 1, 2, 3
    b) 2, 3, 1
    c) 2, 1, 3
    d) 3, 1, 2

RATIONALE FOR THE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Topic Area: Content Management

Correct Answer: C

Test Objective: The responsibilities of each of the four typical roles in a collaborative technical writing team.

a) Incorrect. The coordinator is responsible for maintaining the project schedule and meetings. Ref: Page 42

b) Incorrect. The researcher is responsible for collecting information and coordinating empirical research. Ref: Page 42

c) Correct. The editor is responsible for evaluating missing content areas or where information needs to be reorganized to achieve the project's purpose. Ref: Page 42

d) Incorrect. The designer is responsible for document layout, images, and information graphics. Ref: Page 42

2. Topic Area: Written Communication

Correct Answer: A

Test Objective: The eight guidelines for writing plain sentences.

a) Correct. (4) Putting the subject toward the end of the sentence is an incorrect guideline. The subject should be early in the sentence. Ref: Page 424

b) Incorrect. (3) Eliminate nominalizations is a correct guideline. Ref: Pages 425

c) Incorrect. (2) Writing sentences that are breathing length is a correct guideline. Ref: Page 426

d) Incorrect. (1) Use the doer as the subject of the sentence is a correct guideline. Ref: Page 424

3. Topic Area: Visual Communication

Correct Answer: B

Test Objective: Understand the principle of grouping and how it is used to add visual structure to information products.

a) Incorrect. Carving pages into smaller groups of information using borders is applying the grouping principle. Ref: Page 460

b) Correct. Offsetting items to create a stable feeling in the text is applying the design principle of balance: Pages 450 and 451

c) Incorrect. Rules can be used to carve a page into smaller groups of information. Ref: Page 460

d) Incorrect. Appropriate framing of items using whitespace is applying the design principle of grouping. Ref: Page 457

4. Topic Area: Reviewing and Editing

Correct Answer: C

Test Objective: To identify the focus of each level of editing, specifically level 2: substantive editing

a) Incorrect. (2) is true. Substantive editing checks whether there are any gaps of digressions in the content. Ref: Page 501

b) Incorrect. (1) is true. Substantive editing checks whether the document is designed for its readers and the contexts in which it will be used. Ref: Page 502

c) Correct. See Rationales A and B

d) Incorrect. See Rationales A and B

5. Topic Area: Content Development

Correct Answer: B

Test Objective: The types of communication situation each the activity report technical genre is typically used for?

a) Incorrect: The technical genre of proposals is usually used for presenting plans or ideas for future consideration. Ref: Page 225

b) Correct: The technical genre of activity reports is usually used to objectively present ideas or information within a company on what has happened, what is happening and what will happen in the near future. Informing management or clients about an ongoing issue would typically be done using this genre and white papers or briefings. Ref: Page 231

c) Incorrect: The technical genre of analytical reports is usually used for formal documents that present findings and make recommendations. While the basic model of the activity report would have some use for setting out the findings of a study, the analytical report is more suitable. Its organization is better suited to describing the research methodology used, presenting and discussing the results and making recommendations. Ref: Page 254

d) Incorrect: The technical genre of instructions and documentation is usually used for describing step-by-step tasks Ref: Page 191

6. Topic Area: Visual Communication

Correct Answer: A

Test Objective: To identify the guidelines for using symbols in documents for a global audience.

a) Correct. Symbols do not always translate exactly across cultures, so you need to check use of symbols with readers from other cultures. Ref: Page 492

b) Incorrect. Symbols can be very helpful in technical documents because they enhance translation and comprehension Ref: Page 494

c) Incorrect. A good approach to avoid offense, particularly with religious symbols, is to use simple shapes such as circles or squares. Ref: Page 469

d) Incorrect. Symbols can enhance understanding of second language readers. Ref: Page 492

7. Topic Area: Organizational Design

Correct Answer: A

Test Objective: Recall the patterns of arrangement for the body of a document and how they are used

a) Correct. (4) is not one of the suggest major patterns of arrangement. Ref: Page 403

b) Incorrect. See Rationale (A).

c) Incorrect. See Rationale (A).

d) Incorrect. See Rationale (A).

8. Topic Area: Production and Delivery

Correct Answer: C

Test Objective: Understand the relationship between project outcomes and final production deliverables.

a) Incorrect. (1) is true. Project outcomes are the visible and measurable results of the team's efforts. Ref: Page 41

b) Incorrect. (2) Deliverables are the real products or services delivered to clients upon a project's completion. Ref: Page 41

c) Correct. See Rationales A and B

d) Incorrect. See Rationales A and B

9. Topic Area: Project Analysis and Developing a Reader Profile

Correct Answer: C

Test Objective: Why are reader profiles important for technical communication?

a) Incorrect: The reader profile gives detailed information about how readers will use the document. Ref: Page 19

b) Incorrect: Different reader profiles for the same document help with the presentation of information to two very different kinds of audiences. Ref: Page 24

c) Correct: A reader profile is about understanding the target readers. Whilst this understanding will influence the content of the document, the technique of concept mapping is used for visually presenting ideas on content. Ref: Pages 19 and 335

d) Incorrect: Patterns of arrangement help with organizing information in the document. The information required will depend on the needs of the reader identified in the reader profile. Ref: Pages 21 and 403

10. Topic Area: Project Planning and Technical Communications

Correct Answer: D

Test Objective: How to strategically plan the work of a technical communication team.

a) Incorrect. See Rationale D

b) Incorrect. See Rationale D

c) Incorrect. See Rationale D

d) Correct. The proper sequence in strategically planning the work of a technical writing team is to set objectives, create a list of tasks, and set a timeline. Ref: Page 330

5. Continuing Education Requirements

The CPTC Foundation certification does not expire. However, for it to remain current, certificants are required to stay current in the field as demonstrated by achieving a certain number of Continuing Education Units (CEU) over a 24-month period. The CEU requirements can be found on the STC website at *http://www.stc.org/certification*. Additionally, STC will keep a list of current certified practitioners on its web site so that employers can easily verify currency. This list may expand to include other activities as the program develops. Check the STC website for complete information on acceptable CEUs.

Continuing Education Points (CEUs) may be obtained the following ways:

Event	Points
STC Annual Membership (any membership type for Foundation certificants)	2
STC Recorded Webinar (self-study)	1
STC Live Educational Webinar (free, sponsored, and community webinars excluded)	2
STC Online Courses*	6
STC Summit Pre-Conference Courses (full day)	6
STC Summit Pre-Conference Courses (half day)	3
STC Virtual Summit	4
STC Annual Summit	8
Begin and complete a college accredited course related to the Tech Comm field**	8 points per course
Published articles that relate to any aspect of Technical Communication (2/article)	2
Published books publicly available on topics related to Technical Communication (5/book)	5
Presentations at conferences related to aspects of Technical Communication (2/presentation)	2
Total needed within 2 years post-certification date	**12**

* Students must earn a certificate. ** Adjudicated by STC once a transcript is submitted.

Published articles that relate to any aspect of Technical Communication (2 CEUs per article)
Contributions to journals, magazines, or newsletters for a professional organization or association (e.g., the STC journal Technical Communication, Intercom magazine, and STC chapter newsletters). Provide a soft copy and/or a link to the published article and where and when it was published.

Published books that are publicly available on topics related to Technical Communication (5 CEUs per book)
Published books that are publicly available on topics related to Technical Communication. Provide a soft copy and/or a link to the book,details of the book (ISBN, title, publisher, and publication date).

Presentations related to any aspect of Technical Communication at conferences (2 CEUs per presentation)
Presentation at a professional organization or commercial company or nonprofit organization conference, symposia, seminar, meeting, lecture, or workshop. Provide a soft copy and/or a link to the presentation and state where and when it was presented.

All non-STC CEU information should be collected by the certificant and emailed to STC at certification@stc.org.