

The IABC Accreditation Exam
Administered in Chicago every March

Visit iabc.com, information tab, click on the Becoming an Accredited Business Communicator brochure. **Read the sections on the written and oral exam. We also advise you to take the sample exams**, which will help you develop time-saving strategies for the actual exam.

Wear comfortable clothing. An exam survival kit containing fruit, snacks and drinks will be supplied to you. However, feel free to bring your own snacks if you have special dietary considerations. Snacks may be eaten throughout the exam.

Any materials you bring to the exam must be put away once the exam begins.

Four hours and 30 minutes are allotted for the written and oral exams combined. Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes early for the exam and stay 30 minutes after the exam is completed.

Therefore, your total time for taking the exam is five hours and 30 minutes. A 10-minute break is planned for midway through the test.

You will receive a hard copy of the written exam and a disk with the exam file when you have been assigned to a PC and instructions have been given. You may take notes and/or write on the hard copy, but your answers must be answered and saved on your disk. You will fill in your candidate number and set up your answer page prior to beginning the exam. All materials will be returned to exam administration upon completion of the exam.

Written Exam (four hours total)

The exam has three parts:

- **Technical (General) Knowledge** – about 40 percent of the exam, so plan for about 1-1/2 hour on this section.
- **Case Study** – about 40 percent of the exam, so plan for 1-1/2 hour on this section.
- **Philosophy and ethics of communications** – about 20 percent of the exam, so plan for around an hour on this section.
- Reserve 15 minutes to review/edit the exam.

As you begin each section, read over both the directions for the section *and* the questions. This will help you pace yourself to complete that section.

In parts of the exam, you will be given a choice to answer the question from a particular specialty or discipline — for instance, employee communication, marketing communication, etc. Make sure you identify the perspective you will be discussing. Select the discipline where you have the most experience and/or knowledge. Remember that there are no trick questions.

Note when an essay is asked for and when a short answer.

Spelling and grammar count.

A) Technical (General) Knowledge

Tests your general knowledge of communication concepts, tools, and technology, and your ability to write or perform professional communication activities based on actual assignments completed during the examination period.

Composed of essay and short answer. Essay is roughly 225 to 250 words, while short answer is about 100 to 125 words. If the questions calls for you to "list," do just that no more. When asked to discuss, use the essay format.

B) Case Study

Developing a full-range communication program. Tests your ability to think through and develop a complete communication program for a specific organizational or case problem. Choose the perspective based on your knowledge or professional experience.

Scenario provided on a communication issue/challenge. Answer questions based on communication planning.

C) Philosophy and Ethics

Tests your understanding of the ethics of organizational communication and of management principles related to communication and of the communicator's role in their application.

Composed of essay and short answer. Use same approach as the technical knowledge section.

Oral Exam (30 minutes)

While you are taking the written exam, you will be called out of the room to take the oral exam in another room. The oral exam is administered by at least two accredited business communicators. You will be asked to explain how you would handle a communication problem. You will be given 15 minutes to review the materials provided for this exam. You may write on the materials or make notes as you see fit.

Following your review of the materials, you will be asked to make an informal, seven- to 10-minute presentation to the examiners. Keep your presentation closer to seven minutes rather than 10, to allow yourself time to respond to questions from the judges as needed. Your presentation should describe the problem as you see it, the general solution you'd propose and your supporting rationale. Remember, this is a presentation to examiners, not your recommendations to management of the company.

In addition to the information given, you should supply whatever facts or assumptions you deem necessary and logical under the circumstances. Just make sure to clearly state what they are, so the judges can take them into account in evaluating your presentation. As with the written exam, there are no trick questions.

The remaining five to 10 minutes may involve questions from the judges. Relax. This is an informal format, and evaluators will do their best to make sure you're comfortable and at ease.

The following chart summarizes the recommended time allotted to the four exam sections.

IABC Accreditation Exam Summary
TOTAL EXAM TIME = 4-1/2 hours oral and written)

Section	Topic/ content	Format	Total time for section	Approx. time per question	% of overall mark
Part 1	Technical knowledge	6 –8 essay questions	1 hour, 45 min.	12-15 min. each	40%
		4-5 short answers		5-7 min. each	
Part 2	Philosophy and ethics	2 essay questions	45 min.	10-12 min. each	20%
		4-5 short answers		5-7 min. each	
		3 short answers		3-5 min. each	
Part 3	Case Study	Choose from one of 4-6 case studies	1 hour, 15 min.	Approach as a communications plan, or as though you were answering 3-5 essay-style questions	40%
The most important!	Final review of written exam	Give yourself time at the end to review your exam and check for missing information, basic spelling, etc.	15 min.		100%
Part 4	Oral exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background materials provided are reviewed by candidate • Candidate makes a presentation to proctors • Proctors may ask questions (Exam is tape-recorded) 	30 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 minutes to review materials, prepare, make notes, etc. • 7-10 minutes for an oral presentation • Up to 5 minutes for questions 	Factored in with written exam and portfolio scores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% for portfolio • 58% for written exam • 17% for oral