

Candidate Guide to Preparing for a CAS Exam

Developed by the CAS Candidate Advocate Working Group

About This Guide

This guide was developed by recent and current candidates serving on the CAS Candidate Advocate Working Group (CAWG). While the resources linked throughout are maintained by the CAS, the timeline recommendations reflect the experiences of the working group and are intended as guidance. In the event of any discrepancy, the Syllabus of Basic Education and its dates and deadlines are the official record and take precedence over all other sources, including the CAS website.

Note: this information is updated for CAS Exams MAS-I, MAS-II, 5, 6C/I/U, 7, 8, and 9. For information on [VEEs](#), [DISCs](#), and [PCPA](#), refer to their respective exam pages.

6+ months prior to exam:

Familiarize yourself with upcoming exam dates

Begin planning when you should start studying and map out your preparation strategy. CAS post-exam survey data indicate that, on average, candidates report studying between 250 and 345 hours, depending on the specific exam.

Note, all accommodation requests and window extensions must be submitted by the registration deadline.

	JULY – AUGUST 2026	OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2026
 EXAMS OFFERED	MAS-I & MAS-II	MAS-I, MAS-II, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
 EXAM DATES	July 29 – August 4, 2026	Exams 5, 6, 7, 8, 9: October 19 – October 27, 2026 MAS-I & MAS-II: October 28 – November 5, 2026
 REGISTRATION OPENS	May 13, 2026	July 15, 2026
 REGISTRATION DEADLINE	July 9, 2026	September 29, 2026
 REFUND DEADLINE	July 16, 2026	October 6, 2026

4+ months prior to exam:

Review Current Content Outlines

All current Content Outlines can be found on their respective exam pages. Content Outlines are updated every 3-5 years in line with the Actuarial Professional Analysis (APA), and Text References are updated annually.

Exam MAS-I	Exam MAS-II	Exam 5	Exam 6C	Exam 6I
Exam 6T	Exam 6U	Exam 7	Exam 8	Exam 9

Begin Ordering and Downloading Text References, Study Kits, and Study Materials

Text References listed in Content Outlines: The source key at the end of each exam's Content Outline explains how to access each text reference. While many references are available online, some may require the purchase of a book and/or study kit, so be sure to review the source key early and plan accordingly.

Consider reading a few study-related *Future Fellows* Articles

This is a good time to start thinking about your study strategy for the upcoming sitting. These articles are written by current and recent candidates that are part of the CAWG.

- [*There's No Right Way to Study: Unconventional Tips from CAS Candidates*](#)
- [*Using Pop Culture to Study for Exams*](#)
- [*When and Why Should My Study Strategy Change?*](#)
- [*How to Take Effective Study Breaks*](#)
- [*Combating Burnout*](#)

3 months prior to exam:

Register for your exam

Upcoming exam dates, registration dates, registration deadlines, and refund deadlines are available at the top of this page. While key dates are provided here, candidates should always verify the latest information for their specific exam sitting on the CAS website.

Communicate your study plan with your manager and team; put the time on your calendar

Especially when study time or exam windows overlap with busy work seasons, be sure to communicate your study time plans with your manager and team so everyone is on the same page.

Begin to familiarize yourself with the Pearson VUE spreadsheet environment

Note that the Pearson VUE spreadsheet environment is not identical in functionality to Excel. A blank spreadsheet is included in the [Sample Item Types Demo](#) found on the Pearson VUE/CAS website. Candidates can expect to see this spreadsheet on all CAS exams at Pearson VUE test centers. Please review the [Pearson VUE Spreadsheet Functionality for CAS Exams](#) for more detailed information and a link to the Spreadsheet Function List. Practicing in the spreadsheet environment before exam day can help reduce surprises and improve efficiency during the exam.

2 months prior to exam:

Review Exam Preparation Resources

Sample Resource Library

The CAS remains committed to building these resources and developing additional tools that reflect candidate feedback and strengthen exam preparation across all exams. Current resources are available in the [Sample Resource Library](#) and include Practice Items and Solutions, and Grader Insight Videos. As resources for other exams become available, they will be added to the library.

Post-Exam Summaries

Available for April/May 2023 – Present: [Post-Exam Summaries](#) consist of a general section that applies universally to all constructed response exams, followed by individual sections for each of the exams. This resource is designed to provide candidates with insightful observations on candidates' exam performance, coupled with expert recommendations for improvement.

Full length practice exams for MAS-I and MAS-II

These exams are available in an un-proctored Pearson VUE environment and are available for purchase from the CAS in partnership with The Infinite Actuary, ACTEX, and Coaching Actuaries. The practice exams are \$99 and [more information about them can be found here.](#)

Read about The Importance of Adverbs on Exams

Review this as you begin practicing open response / written questions. [Adverb information can be found here.](#)

Verify Your Pearson VUE Exam Appointment

Confirm that you have successfully scheduled your exam appointment with Pearson VUE and received a confirmation email. Verifying your appointment details well in advance provides time to address any issues before exam day.

1 month prior to exam:

Review key Know Before You Go (KBYG) information

Candidates should review the [KBYG](#) information in its entirety before exam day. The CAWG suggests that as you work through practice exams, sample items, and past exam questions, you keep the following topics in mind:

- Each exam includes one optional **15-minute exam break**.
- For Exams 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9: when requested, final answers should be linked or typed in the **specified yellow highlighted cell**.
- Review the **possible Item Types** you could see on Exams 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Refer to each exam's Content Outline for the item types applicable to that exam.
- Understand the difference between **Standalone Items vs. Cases** and how each will appear on Exams 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Prior to the start of the exam window:

Review your Pearson VUE Confirmation email

Verify the date, time, and location of your exam appointment. Familiarize yourself with the location of your testing center and plan your route in advance, accounting for potential traffic, parking, or public transportation delays.

Review the Reschedule Policy

If your plans change, be aware that exam appointments can only be rescheduled through Pearson VUE, depending on availability, up to 48 hours before your scheduled appointment time.

1-3 days prior to exam:

Review the 15-minute break policy

If you haven't already, review the exam break policy – especially if it's your first exam with a break.

Review the Pearson VUE Admission Policy

Plan what time you need to arrive at the center ahead of your appointment time. Review the ID policy, check-in process, and the types of calculators you are allowed to bring into the testing center. Note that a laminated spiral notebook and fine point felt pen will be available to use for scratch work.

Exam Day

Exam Day Tips from the CAWG

Every candidate approaches exam day differently, but CAWG members recommend a few simple steps to help reduce stress and allow you to focus on your exam:

- Arrive early and allow extra time for traffic, parking, public transportation, and check-in.
- Confirm your ID and calculator meet the requirements before exam day.
- Stick to a familiar routine and avoid last-minute changes that could add stress.
- Read the exam instructions carefully before you begin.
- Use your optional 15-minute break in the way that best supports your exam plan.
- Don't let one challenging question affect your confidence or performance on the rest of the exam.

Most importantly, trust the preparation that got you to exam day and focus on demonstrating what you know.

After the Exam

Keep the NDA in mind

All candidates sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) at the start of their exam; when discussing the exam or contributing to any online discussions, do not share anything that would violate the NDA. Avoid discussing specific exam questions or sharing exam content, even with colleagues who sat for the same exam.

Within 5 business days of your exam:

Candidate Feedback and Grievances Policy

If you have concerns about an exam question, the exam content, or your overall exam experience, it is important to understand the difference between feedback and grievances. Deadlines occur shortly after the exam, so submissions must be made promptly.

Candidate Feedback: Feedback is used to share comments or concerns about exam questions or exam content. Feedback triggers a review by the CAS but does not require a formal response. Candidates can provide feedback by:

- Flagging an item during the exam using the Pearson VUE "Flag for Comment" feature.
- Completing the Post-Exam Questionnaire immediately after the exam.
- Submitting feedback through the CAS Feedback Form within one week of the exam if the feedback is intended to influence scoring.

Examples of feedback may include concerns about a potentially defective question, content that appears to be outside the Content Outline, or a question that cannot be answered using the information provided.

Candidate Grievances: A grievance is a formal submission regarding an issue unrelated to the content of the exam itself. Grievances require a formal review and response from the CAS and must be submitted within 5 business days of the exam date.

Examples of grievances may include testing center disruptions, technology issues, or other exam administration irregularities. If you experience an administration irregularity at the testing center, report it to the test center staff and request a Pearson VUE Case Number.

For complete information, review the [CAS Candidate Feedback and Grievances policy](#).

6-8 weeks after the exam window ends:

Exam Results

Exam results are released between 6-8 weeks after the exam window closes (barring any unforeseen issues). For the latest information on Exam Results timing, see the CAS Announcements.

2-3 months after individual exam results are released:

Summary of Exam Statistics

The Summary of Exam Statistics file is updated 2-3 months after individual Exam Results are released.

Start preparing for your next exam

A Final Note from the CAWG

Our goal in creating this timeline was to help candidates navigate the exam process with greater confidence by bringing important deadlines, policies, and resources together in one place.

Whether you are preparing for your first CAS exam or your tenth, we hope this guide has helped you feel more prepared.

Best of luck with your upcoming exam!