

# CPHQ Study Roadmap

*A practical preparation plan for the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality exam — the most internationally recognized healthcare quality credential.*

## The exam in brief

CPHQ is run by NAHQ (the National Association for Healthcare Quality, USA) and is taken worldwide. It is a computer-based, multiple-choice exam covering the full quality role. There are no mandatory degree or experience prerequisites, but NAHQ recommends experience in a healthcare quality role — the exam assumes you recognize the work, not just the definitions. Check current fees, question count, and scheduling at [nahq.org](http://nahq.org), as details change.

## What it covers (the four domains)

Domain	What's inside
<b>Organizational leadership</b>	Quality structure, culture, strategic planning, committees, regulatory and accreditation environment.
<b>Health data analytics</b>	Indicators, sampling, basic statistics, run and control charts, interpreting and presenting data.
<b>Performance &amp; process improvement</b>	PDSA, Lean, root cause analysis, FMEA, project management, change management.
<b>Patient safety</b>	Incident reporting and analysis, risk management, safety culture, high-reliability concepts.

*Weighting between domains shifts between exam versions — get the current content outline free from [nahq.org](http://nahq.org) and let its percentages set your study time.*

## The 8-week plan (working professional's pace)

Weeks	Focus
<b>Weeks 1–2</b>	Read the current NAHQ content outline. Take one full practice test cold to find your baseline — expect it to hurt. Map your weak domains.
<b>Weeks 3–4</b>	Study your two weakest domains. Use a structured review source (NAHQ's own review materials, or the widely used HQ Solutions text). Make one page of notes per domain.

<b>Weeks 5–6</b>	Study the remaining domains. Practice questions daily — 20 a day beats 140 on Saturday. Review every wrong answer until you can explain why.
<b>Week 7</b>	Second full practice test under time conditions. Return to whatever still scores lowest. Rework your one-page notes.
<b>Week 8</b>	Light review of notes only. Book the exam for the start of the following week. Sleep — test-day clarity is worth more than one more chapter.

### Advice that saves candidates

- The exam tests judgment, not recall: many questions ask for the BEST or FIRST action among several defensible ones. Practice choosing, not just knowing.
- Your daily QI work is study material — every CAP, audit, and committee meeting maps to a domain. Name the concept as you do the work.
- Data analytics is the domain most clinical candidates underestimate. Give run charts, control charts, and sampling real time.
- If you fail, the score report shows domain performance — it's a study map for the retake, not a verdict. Many strong QIOs passed on the second attempt.

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