

HRPA CKE1 and CKE2 Item-Writing¹ Guidelines

The CKE1 and CKE2 are knowledge exams. The purpose of those exams is to ensure that candidates have acquired the requisite knowledge base to practice as HR professionals.

The difference between the CKE1 and CKE2 is that they are at different levels of practice.

Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP)

Entry Level



The CHRP is an entry level designation, but it is also the best known HR designation in Canada. It is intended for HR professionals in roles that are mostly administrative in nature, such as a contributing role in a larger HR function, or a sole HR practitioner in a small HR function. Individuals in this level would have responsibilities such as supporting HR initiatives, executing tasks passed down from management, and operating at the tactical and transactional levels.

Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL)

Professional Level



There have been major changes in what is expected of human resources professionals e.g., they must understand their organizations better and operate at a more strategic level, provide a higher level of thinking, to be more solution providers and less process administrators. HR professionals at the CHRL level can be found in either specialist or generalist positions with responsibilities such as managing projects, programs, and initiatives, implementing plans passed down by senior management, and delegating tasks to entry-level staff. In professional matters, individuals at this level can act independently.

The coursework for the CHRP designation will normally be completed at the diploma level whereas the coursework for the CHRL designation will normally be completed at the degree level. Thus the CKE1 is a knowledge exam aimed at a diploma level whereas the CKE2 is aimed at the degree level. The functional areas being tested are the same for the CKE1 and CKE2.

Relating the CKE1 and CKE2 to the HRP Human Resources Professionals Competency Framework, the CKE1 relates to the knowledge base required to support the competencies at the CHRP level (first

¹ Psychometricians like to use the word item instead of question. There is no difference between item-writing and question writing.

column) whereas the CKE2 relates to the knowledge base required to support the competencies at the CHRL level (second column).

Question format

The CKE1 and CKE2 each use a standard four-option multiple choice format.

(Note, however, that the CHRP & CHRL Employment Law Exams both use a three-option multiple choice format with a mix of scenario & independent items.)

Item difficulty

In the end, the cut score for the exam will be set using a professionally acceptable methodology (a modified-Angoff procedure) and subsequent forms will be equated back to the base form. The best questions are those that discriminate between candidates that are sufficiently knowledgeable from those who are not. Practically, this translates to questions of medium difficulty for their target populations (the standard setting process will do the fine-tuning here).

There can be a range of difficulty across questions. However, a question that could only be answered correctly by 20% or less of candidates would be considered too difficult. Conversely, a question that would be answered correctly by 80% or more of candidates would be considered too easy. Questions in the mid-range of difficulty are often the best.

Question writing guidelines

In developing questions, the usual guidelines apply. Below are a number of the most common guidelines for developing multiple-choice questions.

There is a specialized terminology when it comes to multiple-choice questions. A question with the answer options can be called an item. The question itself is called the stem. The correct option is called the key. The incorrect options are called distractors.

Item:

Where colours mixed together produces purple? ←Stem

- a) Blue and Green ←Distractor
- b) Red and Yellow ←Distractor
- c) Blue and Orange ←Distractor
- d) Red and Blue ←Key

- Keep the amount of time it takes to read the question as short as can be (no extra words, conciseness of expression)
- The stem should be in the form of a question
- The stem should be positively worded (avoid NOT or EXCEPT in the stem)

- Avoid 'double-barreled' questions; make questions about one thing
- Avoid 'all of the above' and 'none of the above' as options
- Avoid trick questions
- The distractors should be the approximately the same length and phrased in a similar fashion as the key
- All options should appear plausible to the unknowledgeable—there should be no 'joke' option.
- Among the options, absolute qualifiers such as 'always,' 'never,' 'none,' or 'all' should be avoided
- The key is placed at random so that the old theory of choosing option "b" or "d" when in doubt doesn't apply
- There should be one and only one correct answer
- The answer should not be a matter of opinion
- A knowledgeable candidate should be able to answer the question without seeing the options
- Avoid textbook phrasing in creating questions (don't lift questions directly from the textbook)
- The level of the language should be appropriate to the content of the exam
- Each question NEEDS to be linked to ONE competency. Some questions may be linked to more than one competency but select the one that is the strongest.
- Use Canadian spelling (Canadian Oxford Dictionary).
- Acronyms should not be used except where knowing what an acronym means is at question
- The first word of options is always capitalized.
- Should speak of 'organizations' rather than 'businesses' or 'corporations' or 'companies' so as to be inclusive of not-for-profits and government, unless inclusivity is not desired.
- Never use the word 'you'; speak of the HR professional.
- Statutes appear in italics.
- Include "and" in lists in answers (e.g., Staff, board members, customers, and other stakeholders)
- Joint health and safety committee is not capitalized unless a specific committee is referred to (e.g., "Workplaces should have joint health and safety committees." "She is chair of the Joint Health and Safety Committee.")
- Term identification questions begin "What is the term for XXX," not "What term refers to XXX" (just a matter of consistency)

Punctuation

- Use single space after periods between sentences.
- Use periods at end of each option unless options are just a single word (or two/three-word term/phrase).
- Use dashes for number ranges: 10–12 seconds.
- Use the serial comma (e.g., apples, oranges, and pears)
- No periods in acronyms: US, UK

Numbers

- Where the options are numbers, they should be ordered in ascending order.
- Digits for all numbers in items and cases, except at beginning of sentence. Also, except when referring to common phrases (e.g., a day or two) or where number is one but could mean 'a' (e.g., in one eye).
- In reports, use words for numbers under 10, digits for 10 and over
- Use % rather than percent or per cent

- 7:00 a.m.
- Use fractions rather than decimals for parts of years, hours, etc: $7\frac{1}{2}$, not 7.5
- Dates: April 25, 2017 (not 25 April 2017); January 2016