

Professional Designation Testing Steps and Recommended Areas of Study

Looking at your escrow peers and eyeing their professional certification? There is no better time than this time to investigate how to start on the path to certification. The Professional Designation program was established through the California Escrow Association and has gained serious state and national recognition. Holding a Professional Designation demonstrates your commitment to excellence!

The exams are designed to test your knowledge and competency in the escrow/settlement services field. You will be expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of essential escrow, title and legal terms. You will be expected to figure, or work up, a complete settlement statement and the disbursement worksheet (receipts and checks) BY HAND with the assistance of a calculator. You should have knowledge of how to complete an assumption transaction, a standard sale transaction with a conventional loan or a seller carryback loan. For the CET test, you would complete a financing transaction. You will be required to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of documents, including deeds, notes and trust deeds and how to correctly prepare them.

We are here to help you with the steps:

Step 1 -

Decide which certification is right for you. Here is a very general guideline (not the official requirements):

Certified Escrow Technician (CET) - for assistants and those with just 1-3 years in the business and are well versed in drawing/balancing a financing transactions
Certified Escrow Officer (CEO) - for Escrow Officers who have been working at a desk 4 or more years and are well rounded in sale and financing transactions.
Certified Senior Escrow Officer (CSEO) - for Escrow Officers with 9 or more years at a desk with background knowledge of more complicated residential and commercial sales
Certified Bulk Sale Specialist (CBSS) - for those Escrow Officers who have a specialization in handling business opportunities
Certified Mobile Home Specialist (CMHS) - for those Escrow Officers who have a specialization in handling manufactured homes transfers
Certified Escrow Instructor (CEI) - Escrow Officer must first hold a CSEO designation. This test is concentrated in elements of teaching/learning.

Go to <https://www.ceaescrow.org/default.asp#pageOverview>

- Review the overview video - take note of all the test taking tips
- Review the guideline for each type of certification

Step 2 -

Go to the Sample Exams - <https://www.ceaescrow.org/default.asp#pagePdSampleExams>

- What do the exams look like?
- Study plans should be based on the type of exam.
- Recommend you take any/all of the practice tests regardless of which exam you qualify for. It will give you more insight as to how the tests are structured.

Step 3 -

Purchase the following helpful books to help you study at <https://www.ceaescrow.org/default.asp#pageStore>

- Escrow I, II, III Manuals
- PD Workbook Study Guide

Go to Chicago Title online at this location and get the Title Handbook (free!) for reference on your daily work and to study for the test.

<https://www.chicagotitleconnection.com/TitleHandbook/mobile/index.html#p=2>

Step 4 -

Look for PD Prep sessions that may be held in various regionals during the year. Or, if online classes are available, attend those too!

Step 5 -

When your application is approved, the PD committee will do its best to assign you an appropriate CSEO mentor to help you with your study plan and insights to taking the test.

Step 6 -

Below is a general overview of the recommended areas of study in preparation of taking a Professional Designation exam (may not include all items covered on the test):

1. General escrow process knowledge
2. Review industry vocabulary
3. Familiarity with the CAR Contract (not for CET test)
4. Document Preparation – Deeds, Notes, Deeds of Trust, Request for Notices
5. Title Policies – basic differences in coverage – Owners/Lenders/CLTA/ALTA/HO
6. Commonly used title endorsements
7. Basic title / legal descriptions and easements – definitions and terminology
8. Government Agencies related to escrow and title industry oversight
9. Vesting entities and supporting documentation needed
10. Manners of taking title
11. Lender's Instructions
12. Cash reporting
13. IRS reporting/withholding and FTB Reporting/withholding
14. Proper review of payoff demand and beneficiary statements
15. Prorations - taxes, rents, insurance
16. Property Taxes – payment/delinquent dates/assessment dates/terminology
17. Transfer Tax Calculations
18. Balancing a file - Recommendation - take one (or more) real file(s) and balance it by hand and calculator to match the computer results.

Step 7 -

Look up the dates of upcoming tests. Applications and required work experience certifications are due into CEA Headquarters 5 weeks prior to the requested test date. Start working on these at least 2-3 months prior to the test date.

Submit your application and the fee. Good luck!

Step 8 -

If there should be a section of the test you did not pass, a CSEO will be assigned to review your test. They will focus on needed areas of study based on your test. Sign up to re-take that section as soon as it is available while it is fresh in your mind and within the required time limit. If you do not re-take the test within the time limit, the entire test will need to be re-taken.