ICH CRA Certification Guide – March 2009

General Information

Benefits of Certification

- Certification is increasingly recognized by today's global clinical research industry.
- Major CROs and pharmaceutical companies now encourage CRA certification.
- Certification assists the public, healthcare professionals and the industry itself by identifying standards for professional practice.

Industry Recognition

Based on a survey of CRA managers, those surveyed believed that enhanced professional standing, increased company marketability (for CROs), personal satisfaction, and enhanced recognition by peers and supervisors were the primary anticipated advantages for becoming certified.

About the Exam

The Academy offers the Clinical Research Associate Certification exam (CRA) to qualified individuals. This exam was developed in response to overwhelming interest and the need for accreditation as expressed by CRAs and their managers.

CRA Definition

A CRA is a professional who, irrespective of job title, supervises, monitors, and supports the administration and progress of a clinical trial on behalf of a sponsor. The sponsor, whose intent is the research of pharmaceuticals, biologics or devices, may employ these individuals either directly or indirectly via Contract Research Organisations (CROs) or independent consultants/contractors. The CRA must be independent of the investigative staff conducting the research at the site or institution and should not be employed or supervised by the investigative site or the institution.

Functional tasks for a CRA

A CRA must have knowledge of* and/or experience in the preparation for and conduct of monitoring clinical research sites, including the following tasks:

- Assurance that the research site personnel including the investigators is conducting the study according to the clinical protocol, "Good Clinical Practices," and regulatory requirements.
- Solicitation of adverse events from research site staff for reporting to the sponsor.
- Verify that the data in the CRFs are in agreement with the source documents (source data verification).
- Review accuracy and completeness of site records (site study file, CRFs and other data collection tools, source data).
- Review accuracy of drug accountability.

- Other clinical trial related activities for the sponsor such as protocol development, site/investigator selection, study initiation activities, study termination activities, CRF processing/management activities (including in-house sponsor review and query resolution), final study report development, and supervision of other CRAs.
- Maintenance of the sponsor's study files including all essential documents.
- Complete reporting of all these activities (e.g. visit reports, trial management tracking system).

Eligibility is also extended to those clinical research professionals with two years full-time experience, who have an in-depth knowledge of the field CRA job functions, e.g., In-house CRA, Medical Liaison, etc.

Functional tasks that are not considered CRA-related include:

- Management of subjects via recruitment, protocol specific assessments and data collection at a site.
- Education of subjects or subject's family members as to the conduct of the research protocol.
- Initiation and maintenance of IEC/IRB relations for the respective research site or institution.
- Maintenance of drug inventory and dispensing records.
- Solicitation of information from subjects.

The CRA Exam is a measure of the candidate's general skills and knowledge of the information needed for CRAs to perform effectively. Certification is granted in recognition of the candidate's documented education and working experience as a CRA and successful completion of this written exam. By granting the title of Certified Clinical Research Associate (CRA), The Academy is formally recognising the professional CRA who has provided evidence that he or she meets those professional standards.

Requirements for Admission to the CRA Examination

To qualify to take the CRA exam, each candidate must fulfill one of the following two combinations of education and work experience as a CRA. For the purpose of meeting the work experience requirement, a minimum of 35-40 hours per week qualifies as full-time employment and a minimum of 20 hours per week qualifies as part-time employment, completed prior to the exam date. (See chart for educational requirements.)

Option	Education	Work Experience as a CRA
1	University degree or Paramedical Qualification (e.g., nurse, pharmacy assistant, medical documentation specialist, etc.)	2 years full-time or 4 years part-time
2	Other education	4 years full-time or 8 years part-time

(NOTE: A minimum of 40 hours per week qualifies as full-time employment, and a minimum of 20 hours per week qualifies as part-time employment.)

Employers must be listed on the candidate's application form. The Academy has the right to verify qualifications. A detailed résumé or C.V. must also be included with the application. The C.V. that is provided to the sponsor is not sufficient because it does not show job function performance. Do **not** include your list of study participation on your C.V. Do **not** use the term "See Attached".

Language

The CRA Certification Exam in the ICH regions is provided in the English language.

Please note: Exam candidates in ICH regions may bring an English-German / Spanish / Dutch / Italian / etc. dictionary to the exam. The dictionary will be inspected by the proctor prior to and after the exam is completed. Any attempt to compromise the exam will be grounds for immediate dismissal from the site, invalidation of the exam score, and possible legal action.

CRA Exam Content

The CRA Exam in ICH regions is developed by The Academy's European CRA Certification Exam Committee. The Committee regularly evaluates and improves the existing exam questions, and adds new questions to expand the pool of items in ICH regions.

The exam consists of 125 multiple-choice questions. For each question, candidates are asked to choose the best answer from the options provided. Questions may either be self-contained and cover a single subject or pertain to a previously presented scenario. Of note is that some of the questions only require recall of specific information, while others test the ability of the candidate to comprehend a given situation. A limited number of questions determine the candidate's skills to analyse and solve a more complex 'real life' situation.

The number of questions on the exam from each content area is provided in the heading of the content outline.

Content Outline of the CRA Exam

1. **Project Activities (15 questions)**
    a. Program Level Activities
        i. Participate in the overall clinical development plan
        ii. Recognize applicable regulations for product development
        iii. Ensure clinical trial registry requirements are met
    b. Prepare, submit, and amend the Protocol
        i. Review study objective/design
        ii. Participate in review of inclusion/exclusion criteria
        iii. Prepare schedule of events and description of procedures
        iv. Identify safety and efficacy parameters
        v. Identify need for and prepare protocol amendment
        vi. Coordinate protocol/amendment approval process
    c. Resource Planning and Management

i. Assist with resourcing (e.g., staff, investigational product and other supplies)
ii. Assist with assessment of project timelines
iii. Assist with vendor selection and management (e.g., central lab, CRO)
iv. Train project staff

2. **Prestudy Activities (35 questions)**
    a. Coordination
        i. Identify potential investigators/sites
        ii. Ensure investigator/site feasibility assessments
        iii. Participate in final selection of investigators/sites
        iv. Facilitate site budget/contract approval process
        v. Facilitate investigator/site indemnification agreement approval process
    b. Reports and Forms
        i. Develop Case Report Forms (e.g., CRFs, eCRFs)
            a) draft CRFs and other data collection tools (e.g., diary)
            b) draft CRF completion guidelines
            c) draft ancillary forms (e.g., source documentation checklist)
        ii. Draft or review the following:
            a) informed consent/children's assent form
            b) local privacy requirements
            c) study-specific procedures manual
            d) study-specific monitoring guidelines or monitoring plan
            e) monitoring tools (e.g., monitoring checklist)
    c. Administrative Duties
        i. Identify subject recruitment strategies
        ii. Develop or update trial/subject tracking system
        iii. Collect and review regulatory and administrative documents
        iv. Submit regulatory documents
        v. Identify study-specific ancillary supplies and equipment (e.g., pregnancy kits, measuring devices)
        vi. Collaborate with Data Management Personnel (e.g., database parameters, edit check specifications, data management plan)
    d. Prestudy Visit
        i. Obtain documents necessary to proceed with prestudy (site selection) visit (e.g., confidentiality agreement, curriculum vitae)
        ii. Prepare for prestudy visit
            a) develop an agenda
            b) send documents necessary for prestudy visit to the site (e.g., protocol, Investigator's Brochure)
            c) confirm appointment and ensure necessary personnel are available
        iii. Conduct prestudy visit
            a) review Investigator's Brochure with investigator/study staff

b) review protocol, study goals, methodology, regulatory obligations, and sponsor/CRO requirements with investigator/study staff
c) assess investigator/study staff qualifications
d) assess adequacy of site facility and equipment
e) assess recruitment potential

iv. Document and communicate pre-study visit findings internally

3. **Study Conduct Activities (60 questions)**
    a. Study Initiation
        i. Conduct single-site or multi-center investigator's meeting(s)
            a) plan investigators' meeting and develop agenda
            b) develop investigator meeting materials/handouts/attendance lists
            c) participate as a speaker
        ii. Assist with the investigators' meeting report
        iii. Prepare for initiation visit
            a) confirm protocol submission and approval by IRB/IEC
            b) send study supplies to site (e.g., CRFs, lab materials, ancillary study-specific items)
            c) initiate shipment of investigational product to site
            d) develop an agenda
            e) confirm appointment and ensure necessary personnel are available
        iv. Conduct study initiation visit
            a) train site personnel on sponsor/CRO and regulatory requirements for study conduct (e.g., protocol procedures, EDC)
            b) inventory investigational product and other study supplies
            c) discuss enrollment/recruitment strategy
            d) prepare the study initiation visit report
    b. Study Monitoring
        i. Prepare for monitoring visit(s)
            a) identify items and issues for review or, if applicable, follow-up from previous monitoring visit
            b) confirm appointment and ensure necessary personnel are available
            c) prepare site monitoring visit confirmation letter
            d) assemble necessary documents and monitoring tools (e.g., subject enrollment status sheets, monitoring guidelines)
            e) ensure adequacy of investigational product and other study supplies at site
            f) evaluate subject enrollment status
        ii. Conduct monitoring visit
            a) assess protocol adherence

b) ensure that critical studies are conducted in accordance with appropriate regulatory requirements (e.g., IRB/IEC approval, informed consent, laboratory certification)
c) ensure that informed consent process is conducted according to Good Clinical Practice (GCP)
d) identify and communicate subject safety issues to appropriate staff (e.g., laboratory abnormalities)
e) check collection, storage, and shipment of biological samples
f) assure proper investigational product storage conditions and handling
g) verify investigational product accountability records
h) ensure that protocol amendments have been reviewed, approved, and implemented
i) review study files at site for completeness and accuracy (e.g., signed consent form)
j) review CRFs and source documents for completeness and consistency
k) identify and report significant adverse events to appropriate staff
l) ensure that safety reporting requirements have been met (e.g., IRB/IEC safety reports, reconciliation of SAE reports with CRFs)
m) confirm subjects' investigational product compliance
n) identify study site deficiencies, provide continuing training, and implement corrective action when necessary (e.g., staff changes, site non-compliance)
o) sign and date site monitoring visit log
p) review lists of subjects screened at site (i.e., screening log)
q) assess enrollment issues

iii. Prepare the monitoring visit report
iv. Prepare the monitoring visit follow-up letter to the site
v. Coordinate audit activities
vi. Identify potential fraud and misconduct

c. Data Management
i. Transmit CRFs to Data Management
ii. Review CRF queries from Data Management
iii. Review, clarify, and obtain data changes from sites
iv. Ensure adherence to electronic data capture requirements
v. Ensure adherence to data management plan (e.g., edit checks)

d. Administrative Duties
i. Ensure adherence to monitoring plan
ii. Initiate investigator payments
iii. Maintain documentation of communications with site and sponsor/CRO

iv. Act as a liaison among study sites, sponsor/CRO, centralized services, and collaborating CROs
v. Coordinate audit preparation
vi. Participate in safety monitoring/reporting activities
vii. Mentor and train other CRAs or site staff
viii. Maintain current knowledge of clinical research issues
ix. Assess recruitment plan and follow-up where necessary

e. Study Close-Out Visit
   i. Select appropriate time frame for study termination
   ii. Prepare for study termination visit
      a) identify items and issues for review or follow-up from previous monitoring visit
      b) confirm appointment and ensure necessary personnel are available
      c) prepare study termination visit confirmation letter
      d) assemble necessary documents (e.g., file contents checklist, return shipments inventory)
   iii. Conduct study termination visit
      a) perform final investigational product reconciliation
      b) arrange for return or disposition of unused investigational products
      c) arrange for return shipment or destruction of unused study materials
      d) assure completeness of in-house and site study files (e.g., protocol, amendments, CRFs, informed consent form, correspondence)
      e) obtain final copy of site personnel signatures and initials log
      f) obtain copy of site monitoring visit log and review for completeness
      g) retrieve randomization codes from site
      h) ensure retrieval of all CRFs
      i) review record retention and publication policies with investigator and staff
      j) follow-up on outstanding action items
   iv. Prepare study termination visit report and follow-up letter

4. **Study Follow-up Activities (15 questions)**
   a. Database Lock
      i. Coordinate outstanding data query resolution
      ii. Assist with final reconciliation of safety and clinical databases
   b. Administrative Duties
      i. Obtain copy of final report to the IRB/IEC
      ii. Ensure end-of-study regulatory reports are submitted
      iii. Arrange for final Investigator's payment/grant reconciliation
      iv. Ensure completeness of study master file (e.g., through inventory)

v. Prepare for long term storage/archiving according to records retention schedule

125 Total Questions

CRA Exam Preparation

In order to prepare for the exam, all candidates should review and be familiar with the relevant regulations from:

- ICH Guidelines (E2A, E6, E8)
- Declaration of Helsinki (latest version)
- *A Guide to Clinical Drug Research: 2nd Edition*, A. Cohen & J. Posner (2000), ISBN: 0-7923-6172-5 (recommended)
    - Study designs
    - Pharmacokinetic principles

The most current copy of the ICH Guidelines and other regulatory materials may be found on the following websites:

1. Declaration of Helsinki* (latest version on the Website) http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm
2. ICH Guidelines (e.g. E2—Clinical Safety, E6—GCP) http://www.ich.org/

*Note of clarification on paragraph 29 of the WMA Declaration of Helsinki. The WMA is concerned that paragraph 29 of the revised Declaration of Helsinki (October 2000) has led to diverse interpretations and possible confusion. It hereby reaffirms its position that extreme care must be taken in making use of a placebo-controlled trial and that in general this methodology should only be used in the absence of existing proven therapy. However, a placebo-controlled trial may be ethically acceptable, even if proven therapy is available, under the following circumstances:

- Where for compelling and scientifically sound methodological reasons its use is necessary to determine the efficacy or safety of a prophylactic, diagnostic or therapeutic method; or
- Where a prophylactic, diagnostic or therapeutic method is being investigated for a minor condition and the patients who receive placebo will not be subject to any additional risk of serious or irreversible harm.

All other provisions of the Declaration of Helsinki must be adhered to, especially the need for appropriate ethical and scientific review.

There is a CRA Certification Exam Review available to help prospective candidates assess their level of preparation and identify regulatory information resources. **This is not a training course. Completion of the certification exam review meeting does not guarantee acceptance to the exam.** The cost of the meeting is not included in the Exam price. Contact the ACRP Global Office for specific details.

An online ICH/EU CRA practice exam is also available from the Online ICH/EU CRA Practice Exam website.

CRA Sample Exam Questions

The following samples show the type of questions that will appear on the CRA Exam.

1. **Which of the following is true regarding the study protocol?**
    A. It must contain information on the bioavailability of the investigational product
    B. It must list the name and address of the responsible ethics committee(s)
    C. It must include a description of the statistical methods to be employed
    D. It must define the quality assurance auditing procedures

2. **Which phase of investigational product development has the least number of subjects?**
    A. I
    B. II
    C. III
    D. IV

3. **Which of the following documents must be favourably evaluated by the IRB/IEC?**
    1. Investigator's Brochure
    2. Protocol
    3. Laboratory certification
    4. Informed consent
    A. 1 and 3 only
    B. 2 and 4 only
    C. 1, 2, and 3 only
    D. 1, 3, and 4 only

4. **Clinical trial monitoring is performed to verify all of the following, except that the:**
    A. Rights and well-being of human subjects are protected
    B. Reported trial data are verifiable from the source documents
    C. Trial is conducted in compliance with GCP
    D. Investigator is compensated in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement

Answers

1. C; 2. A; 3. B; 4. D

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These requests may include: change of address, change of test center location, admission ticket was not received, duplicate score report, hand scoring of the answer sheet and cancellation request. All fees must accompany the request in order to be processed.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Academy does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, disability, marital status, sexual preference, religion or national origin.