

SPHR – Senior Professional in Human Resources Certification Overview

Certification Overview

Aspect	Details
Certification Initials	SPHR stands for Senior Professional in Human Resources.
Class	Advanced, strategic-level HR credential targeting senior HR professionals.
Who It's For	HR leaders involved in planning and policy—not entry-level or strictly operational roles. Requires significant HR experience (e.g., bachelor's + 5 years, master's + 4 years, or 7 years HR experience).
What It's About	Strategic HR management: leadership, workforce planning, talent management, total rewards, information management, safety/security.
Certifying Body	HRCI – HR Certification Institute, accredited by NCCA.
Exam Format	140 multiple-choice questions (115 scored + 25 pretest), plus mixed formats (multi-select, fill-in-blank, drag-and-drop, scenario). Duration: 2.5 hours (plus 30 min admin).
Exam Windows	Year-round via Pearson VUE; in-person or online proctored.
Administration	Delivered at Pearson VUE centers globally or via remote proctoring (OnVUE).
Common Pass Rates	Approximately 70% pass rate (2024); historically range ~58–70%.
Recertification	Every 3 years. Maintain by earning 60 credits (45 HR + 15 Business) or retake the exam.

Top FAQs

#	Question	Answer
1	How many questions are on the SPHR exam?	140 total: 115 scored + 25 unscored pretest items.
2	How long is the exam?	2½ hours for the test, plus about 30 minutes for check-in.

3	What's the passing score?	Scaled score of 500 on a 100–700 scale.
4	Can I take the exam online?	Yes—via remote proctoring (OnVUE) or in-person at Pearson VUE centers.
5	What topics does the exam cover?	Five domains: Leadership & Strategy (33%), Workforce Planning (17%), Talent Management (23%), plus Total Rewards, HR Info Management/Safety.
6	What are the eligibility requirements?	Bachelor's + 5 yrs HR, master's + 4 yrs, or 7 yrs HR experience.
7	Is recertification required?	Yes, every 3 years: complete 60 recert credits (45 HR + 15 Business) or retake the exam.

SPHR vs SHRM-SCP: Key Differences

Category	SPHR (HRCI)	SHRM-SCP (SHRM)
Certifying Body	HRCI – Focuses on operational and strategic HR practices.	SHRM – Emphasizes behavioral competencies and situational judgment.
Approach	Traditional exam emphasizing HR knowledge areas and U.S. labor laws.	Competency-based framework tied to SHRM's Body of Applied Skills & Knowledge (BASK).
Eligibility	Requires 4–7 years of HR experience depending on education level.	Similar experience required, but also includes SHRM membership emphasis.
Exam Content	Heavily focused on policy, workforce planning, HR strategy, compliance.	Scenario-based with focus on leadership, decision-making, and real-world behavior.
Recognition	Longstanding, widely respected among HR executives.	Popular with organizations aligned with SHRM competencies.
Recertification	Every 3 years; 60 credits with HR/business mix or retake exam.	Every 3 years; 60 PDCs or retake the exam.
Exam Flexibility	Available online or in-person year-round via Pearson VUE.	Same—SHRM provides both in-person and online testing.
Ideal For	Senior HR leaders who develop policy and drive strategy.	Leaders who influence culture, coach others, and align HR with business outcomes.