BAR Study Guide

Business Analysis and Reporting

Atlas CPA Index — 2026 Edition

Pass Rate: **44%** | Study Hours: **120-150** | Timeline: **10-12 weeks** | Type: **Discipline**

What This Section Tests

BAR extends FAR into business analysis, data analytics, and advanced technical accounting. It tests your ability to analyze financial data, interpret business performance, and apply advanced accounting standards including derivatives, hedging, and business combinations.

Exam Format

Duration	MCQs	TBS	MCQ Weight	TBS Weight
4 hours	50	7	50%	50%

Content Area Breakdown

Area	Content	Weighting
I	Business Analysis	**40-50%**
II	Technical Accounting and Reporting	**35-45%**
III	State and Local Government Accounting	**10-20%**

Suggested Study Path

BAR — 120-150 hours over 10-12 weeks at 15-20 hours/week

Recommended Topic Sequence

#	Topic	Rationale	Time
1	**Business Analysis & Data Analytics**	Largest content area (40-50%). Financial analysis, cost accounting, NPV/IRR, data interpretation — starts with concepts you likely saw in undergrad.	**45%**
2	**Technical Accounting & Reporting**	Advanced topics: business combinations, derivatives, hedging, stock compensation. Builds on FAR knowledge.	**40%**
3	**State & Local Government Accounting**	If weak on FAR government section, BAR tests it again. Compact area but can make or break a marginal score.	**15%**

Study Dependencies

A solid FAR foundation is essential before starting BAR. Business analysis concepts (financial ratios, cost-volume-profit, budgeting) are relatively standalone. Technical accounting builds directly on FAR topics — study it second. Government accounting can be studied in any order but pairs well with a FAR refresher if your FAR study was months ago.

Hardest Topics — Allocate Extra Time

- Derivatives and hedging (fair value vs cash flow hedges)
- Prospective financial analysis (projections vs forecasts)
- Data analytics interpretation
- Variance analysis (materials, labor, overhead)
- Advanced business combinations (step acquisitions, partial disposals)

Weekly Study Timeline

Weeks	Phase	Focus Area
Weeks 1-3	Learning	Financial analysis, ratios, cost accounting, budgeting, CVP analysis
Weeks 4-5	Learning + Practice	Data analytics, NPV/IRR, capital budgeting, variance analysis
Weeks 6-8	Learning + Practice	Technical accounting: derivatives, hedging, stock compensation, business combinations
Weeks 9-10	Practice	Government accounting, public company reporting, advanced consolidations
Weeks 11-12	Final Review	Mock exams, derivatives drills, data analytics TBS practice

Topic Checklist & Practice Tracker

BAR — Check off topics as you master them

Business Analysis (40-50%)

- [ ] Financial statement analysis and ratios
- [ ] Cost-volume-profit analysis
- [ ] Budgeting and forecasting
- [ ] Variance analysis (materials, labor, overhead)
- [ ] Capital budgeting (NPV, IRR, payback period)
- [ ] Risk assessment and management
- [ ] Data analytics and interpretation
- [ ] Performance measures (financial and nonfinancial)

Technical Accounting & Reporting (35-45%)

- [ ] Business combinations (acquisition method)
- [ ] Consolidated financial statements (advanced)
- [ ] Derivatives and hedging activities
- [ ] Fair value measurements
- [ ] Stock compensation (ASC 718)
- [ ] Revenue recognition (advanced scenarios)
- [ ] Public company reporting (SEC filings)
- [ ] Employee benefits and pensions

State & Local Government Accounting (10-20%)

- [ ] Government-wide financial statements
- [ ] Fund financial statements
- [ ] Budgetary accounting
- [ ] Infrastructure and capital assets
- [ ] Special revenue, debt service, capital projects funds

MCQ Score Tracker

Date	Content Area	Score %	Target %

TBS Practice Log

Date	Simulation Topic	Result

Exam Readiness Self-Assessment

- ☐ I score 70%+ consistently on BAR MCQ sets
- ☐ I can complete a TBS within the time budget without hints
- ☐ I have reviewed all content areas at least twice
- ☐ I have taken at least one full-length mock exam
- ☐ I can explain the hardest topics without referencing notes

Study Tips & Resources

BAR — Section-specific strategies

BAR Study Tips

Tip 1

BAR rewards interpretation over calculation. When practicing MCQs, focus on "what does this number mean?" rather than just computing it. The exam tests whether you can advise a client, not just crunch numbers.

Tip 2

Derivatives are abstract until you connect them to real scenarios. Study hedging by thinking about a company with foreign currency exposure or variable-rate debt. The "why" makes the accounting rules stick.

Tip 3

If your FAR government score was marginal, spend extra time here. BAR government questions tend to be more analytical (interpret fund-level data) rather than just preparatory.

Tip 4

Variance analysis follows a formula pattern. Memorize the three-way decomposition (price, quantity, efficiency) and practice until it is automatic.

Exam Day Time Management

Time per MCQ:	Time per TBS:	Exam Duration:
~2 minutes	**~18 minutes**	**4 hours**

BAR has 50 MCQs and 7 TBS, identical to FAR. Budget 100 minutes for MCQs and 126 minutes for TBS. Data analytics TBS may include exhibits — read exhibits before the question.

Trusted Resources

- NASBA — nasba.org — Official exam info, score releases, state requirements
- AICPA — aicpa-cima.com — Exam blueprints, practice exams, ethics
- Your State Board — CPA requirements specific to your jurisdiction
- Atlas CPA Index — atlascpaindex.com — Compare all CPA review courses

Disclaimer: This study path is a suggested sequence based on common candidate experiences, topic dependencies, and review course curricula. It is not endorsed by the AICPA or NASBA, and is not a guarantee of exam performance. Individual results depend on your preparation, background, and study effort. Pass rates and exam format reflect NASBA data as of early 2026 and are subject to change.