SAS Base Certification Guide

Why get certified?

Working at Pentara entails coding using the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) programming language. Our code is held to a high standard by the FDA and by our clients, and many of our clients regularly audit our code and our coders to ensure our performance is up to their expectations. Because of that, Pentara requires that their coders be SAS certified. This document serves as a guide as to how to get your certification and how to save money doing it.

What certification do I need?

This document was updated September 26, 2024. As time passes requirements may change and links may stop working, but as of that date, the information is current. The certification Pentara requires is **Base Programming Using SAS 9.4**. A link to the certification exam is at https://www.sas.com/en_us/certification/credentials/foundation-tools/base-programming-specialist.html. One attempt to take the certification exam costs around $180, but Pentara will reimburse you for the one attempt where you pass the exam if you are hired.

At the end of the day, you only need to pass this certification exam. If you are highly confident and willing to risk losing $180, you could just take the exam without any preparation. However, it is strongly recommended that you take two courses on the SAS website beforehand. The courses are SAS Programming 1: Essentials and SAS Programming 2: Data Manipulation Techniques. These two courses cover all of the material needed for the exam, and with university access you can take both courses for free. The two courses and exam take from 2-5 weeks to complete, self-paced. This is the recommended way you prepare for the exam; you could also purchase a certification prep book or try to find other preparation resources. If you are not a student or don't have access to a university email, the SAS online courses are probably not the most cost-effective option for you. The courses for non-academics cost several hundred dollars each. This document explains how to take the courses through the SAS website.

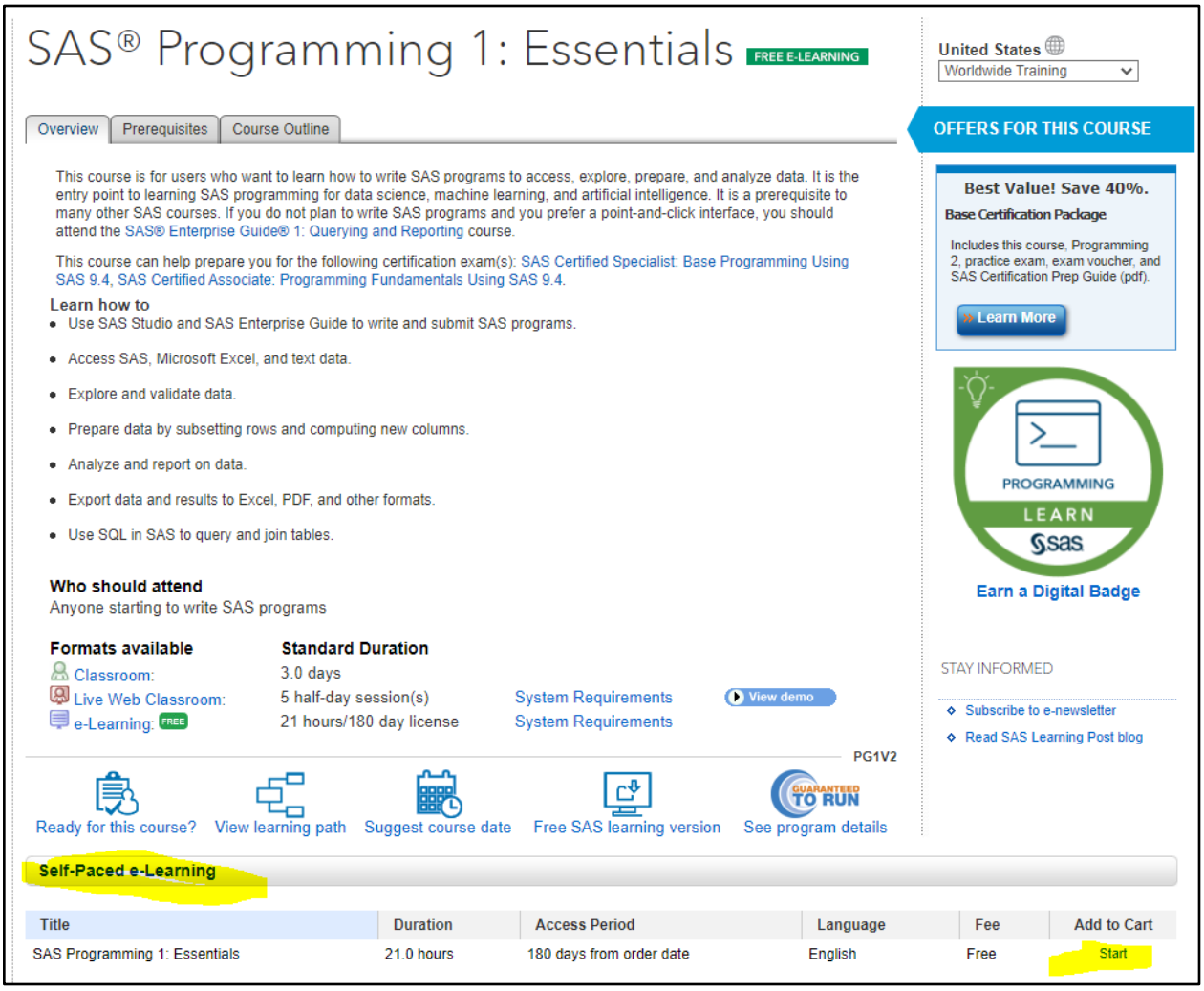
Tips from an Intern

I earned my certification a couple years ago, and there are a few things I wish I'd known before getting certified. First of all, take good notes! You lose access to the online courses after a while so you won't always be able to come back to the online lectures. I recommend starting a document with clear organization, a description of functions that you can understand, and examples of working syntax that you can easily search through with Ctrl+F. Another thing to know is that **not everything you learn over the course of your certification will be equally helpful** to you at Pentara. I would advise paying special attention to the data step, proc sort, proc sql, proc transpose, merging datasets (either with a data step or with proc sql), and defining and accessing macro variables and macro functions. I typically write entire programs using nothing but those commands. Remember, you don't have to be perfect! You work with a

lot of awesome people who will be happy to help you write your code, and 90% of what I learned about SAS I learned through coding at Pentara.

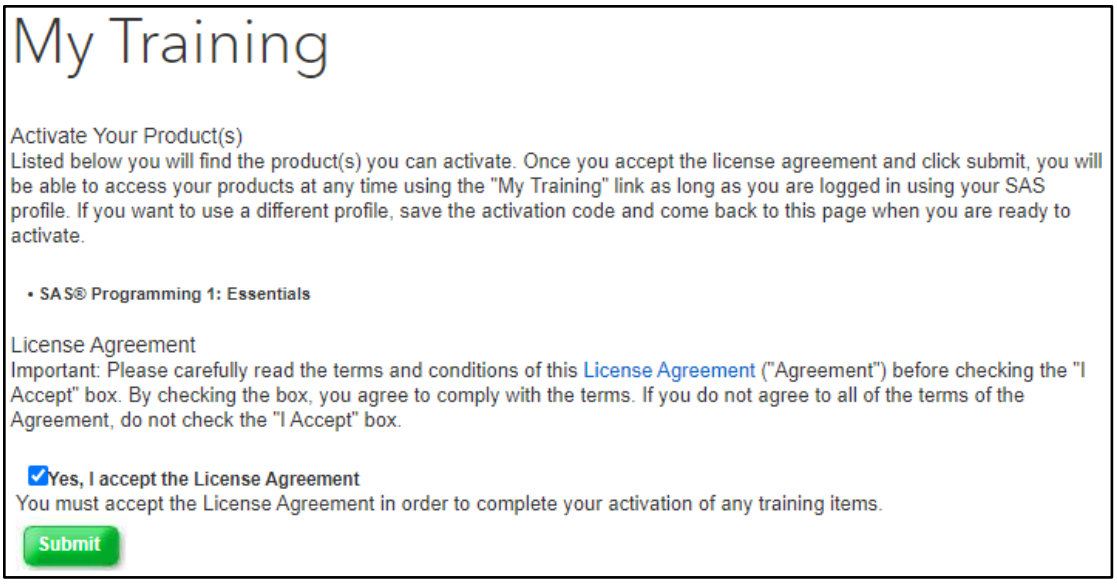
SAS Programming 1: Essentials

This course is available for free to everyone. A link to access the course is at https://support.sas.com/edu/schedules.html?crs=PROG1&ctry=us. Click the link, scroll down, and click “Start” under the Self-Paced e-Learning section to gain access to the course for free.

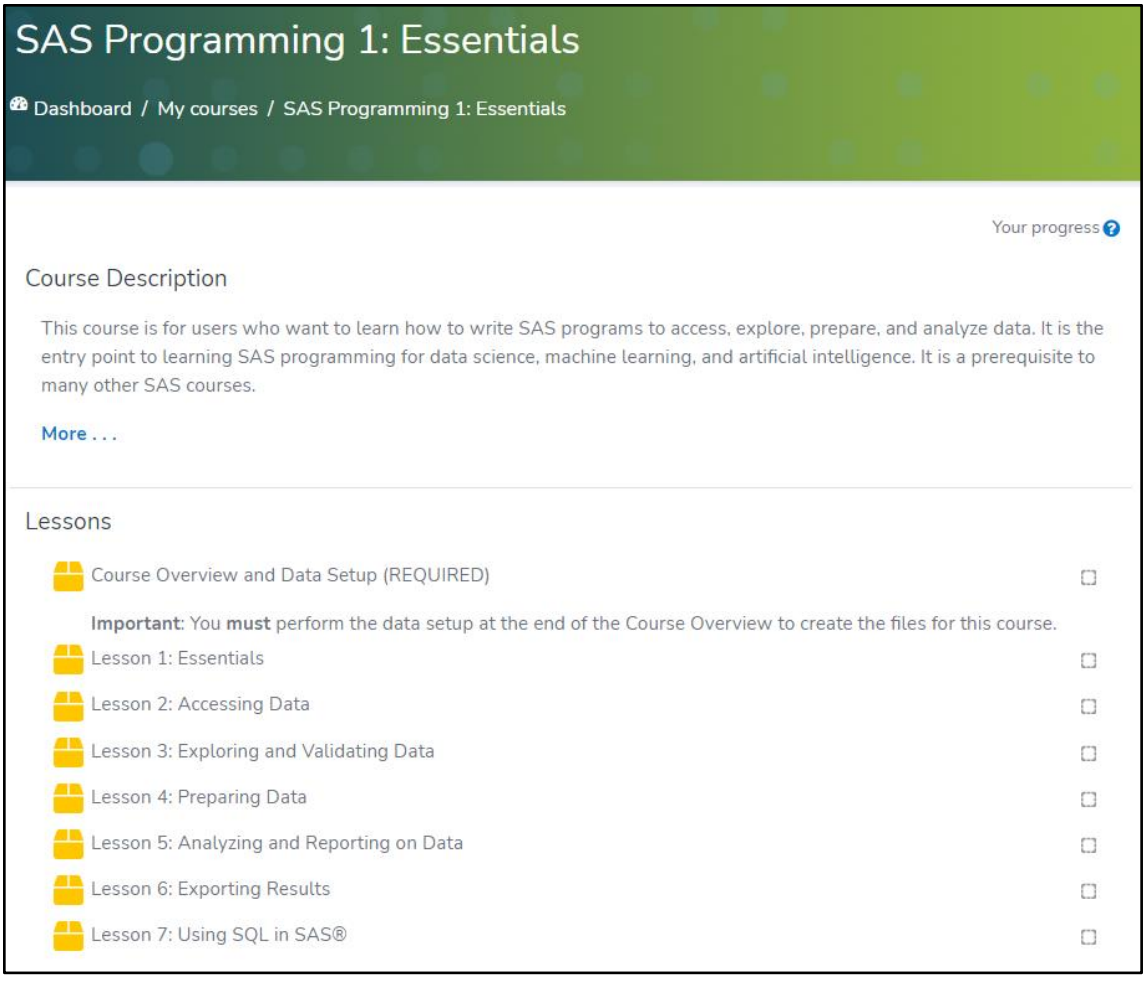


Once you’ve clicked “Start”, you’ll be taken to a page to sign in or make a SAS profile. Sign in if you already have an account, or make a new account. **If you have a university email, you will want to register your account with your school email.**

After you’ve signed in, you’ll be taken to a page to activate the course. Click “Yes, I accept the License Agreement” then the Submit button to gain access to the course.



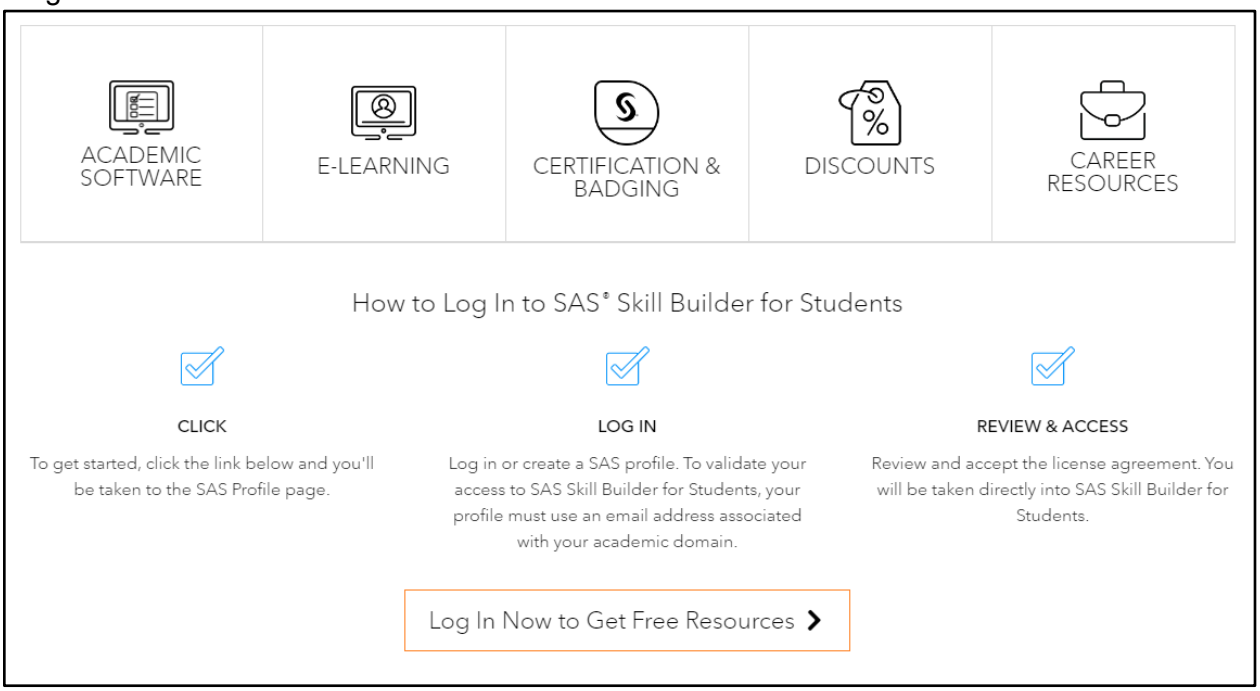
After that, you will have access to SAS Programming 1: Essentials! You can come back to access this course again at https://vle.sas.com/course/view.php?id=6856; it is recommended you bookmark this page. Complete the Course Overview and the 7 lessons before taking the certification exam.



SAS Programming 2: Data Manipulation Techniques

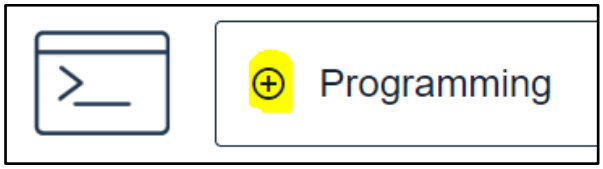
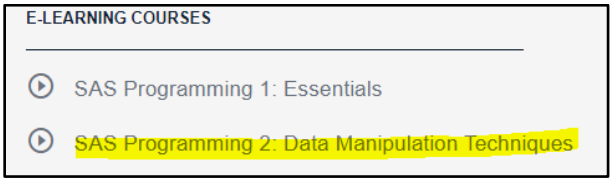
Gaining access to the second course is slightly less straightforward. SAS Programming 2 costs upwards of $800 if you buy it at face value, but fortunately for students, you can gain access to the second course for free through the SAS Skill Builder for Students. The SAS Skill Builder is a suite of different courses available to students for free - **make sure you get access to this course through the portal, not the standard shopping cart!** If you are using a .edu email you will be getting access to this course for free, if you're paying for it you're doing it wrong. Again, if you are not currently a student, you may want to find another way to prepare for the exam.

The first step is to get access to the SAS Skill Builder. Go to the SAS Skill Builder at https://www.sas.com/en_us/learn/academic-programs/students.html, then scroll down and click "Log In Now to Get Free Resources".

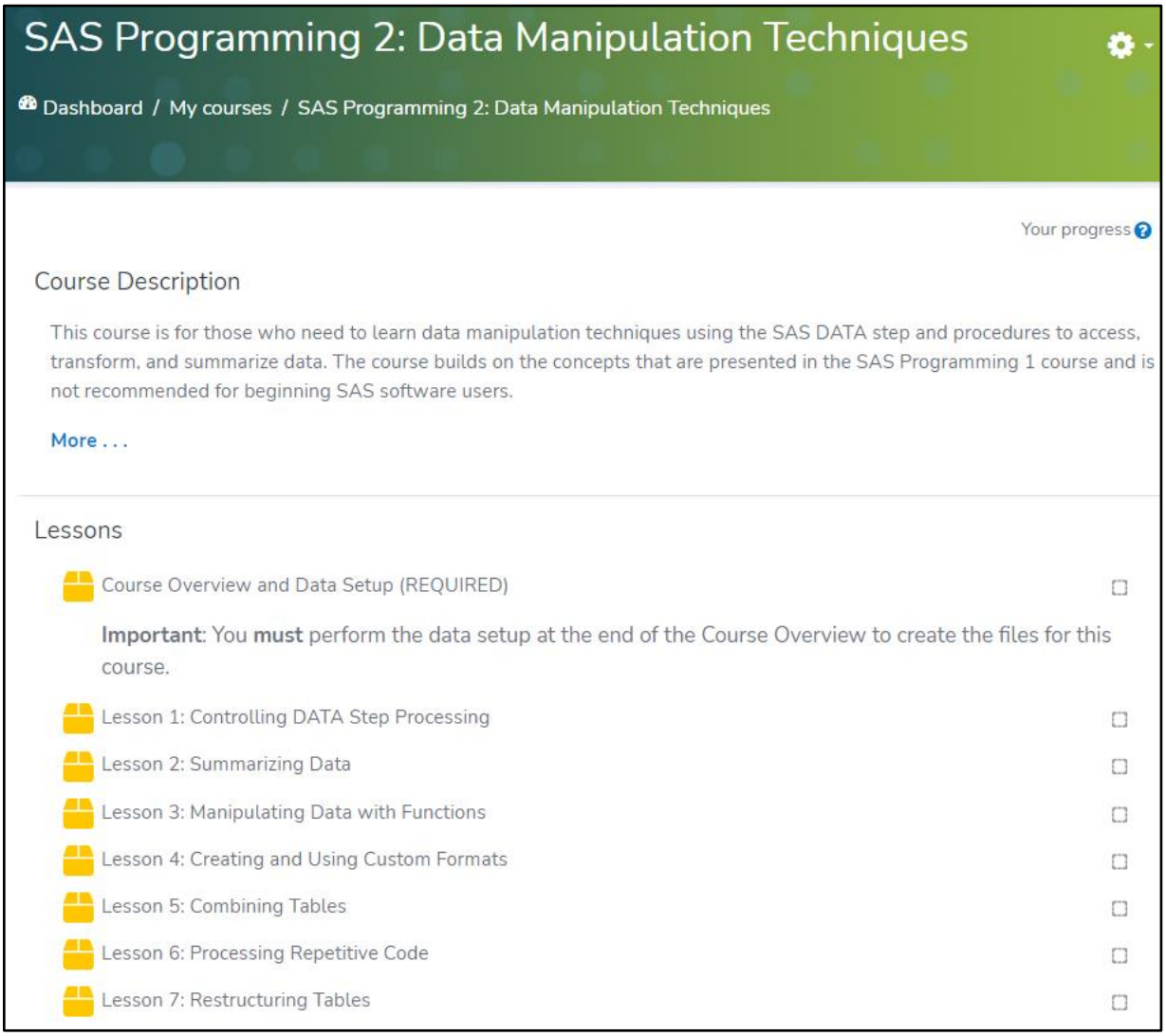


You'll be asked to sign in to your SAS account, sign in with the same account you used for the first course. **This account must be linked to a university email.**

After you've signed in, you'll be taken to a page where you can select which courses you want to enroll in. Click on the plus sign to the left of "Programming" to expand that menu, then click "SAS Programming 2: Data Manipulation Techniques" under E-Learning Courses to enroll in the course. If you ever want to enroll in any of the other courses offered for free through the SAS Skill Builder, you can return to this page at https://vle.sas.com/course/view.php?id=10695.

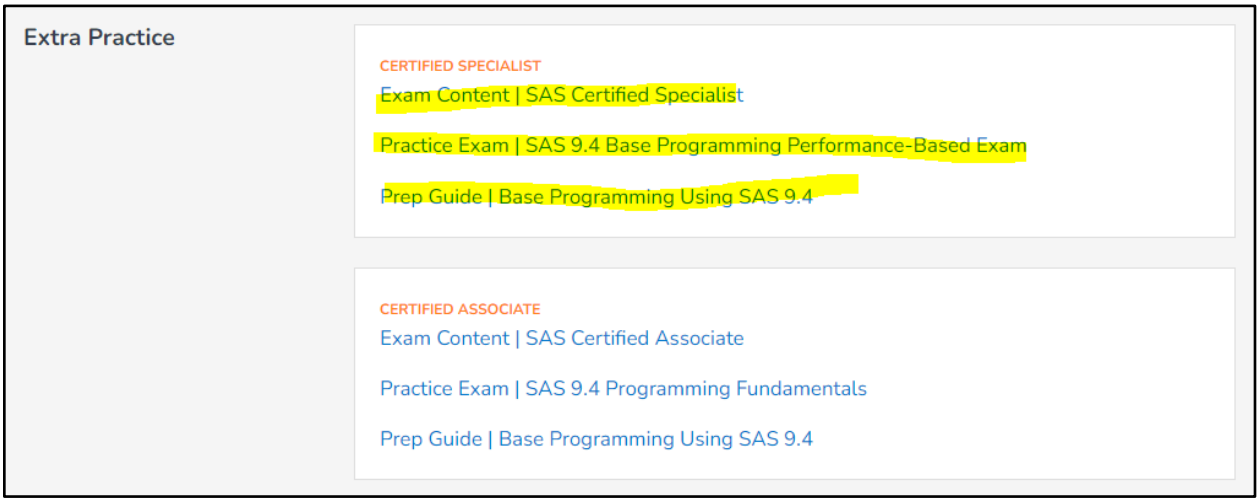
First click the plus to expand the menu	Then select SAS Programming 2
	

Clicking on the course name will take you to a page with information about the course. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the blue button that says “Enroll me”. After that, you will have access to SAS Programming 2: Data Manipulation Techniques! You can come back to access this course again at https://vle.sas.com/course/view.php?id=6853; it is recommended you bookmark this page. Complete the Course Overview and the 7 lessons before taking the certification exam.

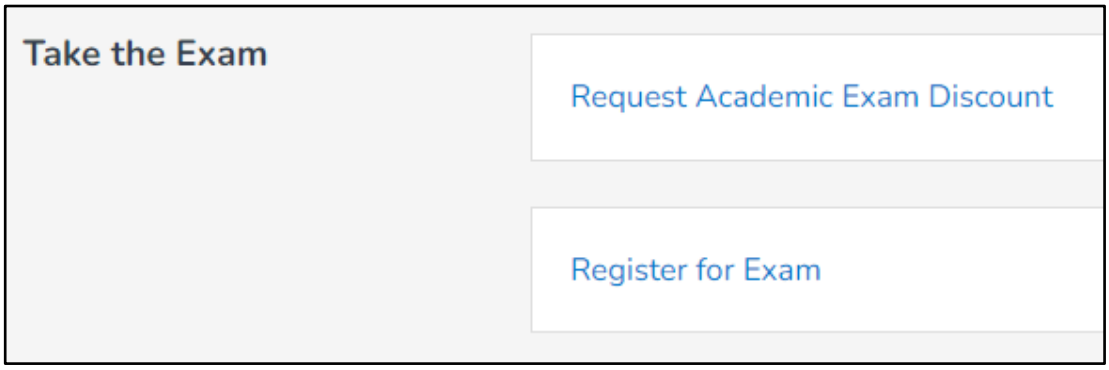


The Certification Exam

After you've taken the courses SAS Programming 1 and SAS Programming 2, you are almost ready to take the certification exam. Go to the SAS Skill Builder page at https://vle.sas.com/course/view.php?id=10695&section=2, expand the programming section, then click on "SAS Certified Specialist: Base Programming Using SAS 9.4". This will bring you to a page with exam practice materials. It is recommended you **use all the highlighted review materials** to prepare - the non-highlighted materials may be useful, but are to become a SAS Certified Associate rather than a SAS Specialist, so you can safely ignore them.



Once you have thoroughly reviewed, you are ready to take the exam! Follow the links farther down on the same page (https://vle.sas.com/course/view.php?id=10695&section=3) under the section "Take the Exam" to register for and take the exam. The links provided walk you through the enrollment process, enroll for the exam "**A00-231 SAS 9.4 Base Programming -- Performance-based exam**". Note that you should request an academic discount since you're being reimbursed only if Pentara hires you..



You Did It!

After you pass the certification exam, congratulations! **You are finished!**
Now that you are done, send a copy of your new resume with the SAS certification badge on it, or just send a copy of your SAS certification to opportunities@pentara.com . After that, Pentara will consider you for our open positions, both as a full time employee, or as an intern if that's what you are interested in. If you are hired, you can work with the people at Pentara to get reimbursed for your successful exam attempt, and now you're ready to start coding.