

## ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE: ADDRESSING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN IMPLEMENTING A LEARNING OUTCOMES-BASED CURRICULUM<sup>1</sup>

This example illustrates a governance structure bringing together a statutory examinations body working in partnership with an IFAC member body (MB), regulatory bodies, employers, the Government and other stakeholders to develop and administer a learning outcomes based professional accountancy curriculum. This example represents a discrete aspect of an approach taken by a MB and is not intended to be read as comprehensive description of its entire approach

### Guiding Principles in Practice

	Commentary
Design	<p><b>Defining the role of the professional accountant</b></p> <p>The design process commences with a job analysis survey involving a cross-section of employers categorized according to size, industry and sector. The focus of the survey is to identify the competencies required to effectively undertake the broad responsibilities of a professional accountant in the current work environment. Beyond the job analysis, the survey also elicits feedback from stakeholders including trainers, regulators, and education experts on the existing curriculum. The outcome of this analysis is a gap analysis report summarizing any critical gaps in the existing curriculum's key competencies relative to stakeholders' expectations and making recommendations to address such deficiencies.</p> <p><b>Developing the curriculum content, learning outcomes and progression</b></p> <p>The Examinations Board, comprising representatives from the Government, the MB and regulators, considers the gap analysis report and approves the appointment of a technical task force to further analyze the recommendations, develop revised curriculum content and revised learning outcomes. The technical task force also makes reference to the International Education Standards including the levels of proficiency, competence areas and associated learning outcomes and other relevant standards and Bloom's taxonomy. In developing the learning outcomes, curriculum experts from the national institute of curriculum development are engaged.</p> <p>The draft curriculum incorporating detailed course content (learning outcomes and specific topics for each paper) are exposed to the wider group of stakeholders for comment. The comments are incorporated as appropriate and further discussed through a series of workshops/forums. The final curriculum is approved by the Examinations Board. The curriculum is thereafter accredited with the National Qualifications Authority,</p>

<sup>1</sup> This publication is part of the guidance materials that support the implementation of a learning outcomes approach.

	<p>a government entity responsible for accreditation of all post-secondary education programs in the country.</p> <p>The professional accountancy curriculum features three parts. Part I is based on the foundation level of proficiency; Part II is based on the intermediate level of proficiency while Part III is based on the advanced level of proficiency. Each part has six papers making a total of 18 papers. There is an examination for each part which is administered once every six months.</p> <p>The learning outcomes are developed for each paper, aligned to the content and are specified in terms of action verbs which are specific, measurable and realistic. The learning outcomes and action verbs as developed are cross-matched with those specified in Table A of the IESs and any gaps are addressed in the curriculum content in order to ensure Table A requirements are met. Consideration is accorded to the need for progressiveness of learning outcomes as one advances from the foundation to advanced level.</p> <p>The Examinations Board accredits training institutions in liaison with the Government Ministry responsible for Education. Accredited institutions are allowed to implement the curriculum and are provided with trainers' guides and pilot examination papers. Trainers' guides provide in detail the extent of coverage of a given subject area, model questions and solutions (incorporating case studies for a more effective testing using appropriate action verbs) and emerging issues of interest to the learning content.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness monitoring</b></p> <p>The mode of delivery of the learning program is continuously and closely monitored for accreditation purposes. The monitoring also covers the teaching approaches and questions used in illustrations. In this regard, the preparation of schemes of work and other teaching aids is required.</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b></p>	<p><b>Assessment activities</b></p> <p>Assessment of an individual's achievement of learning outcomes is performed through</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Written examinations; and</li> <li>2. Practical experience log.</li> </ol> <p><i>Written examinations</i></p> <p>Assessment development to measure and evidence achievement of learning outcomes</p> <p>The assessment development process begins with the examination setter designing a table of specification for each paper. The table of specification specifies the following, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum syllabus coverage (ideal 100 per cent);</li> <li>• Levels of testing of cognitive skills as per Bloom's Taxonomy with greater focus on knowledge and comprehension at foundation level, application and analysis at intermediate level and synthesis and evaluation at advanced level; and</li> </ul>

- Mapping of each question to the learning outcome tested and the specific topic in the syllabus examined.

The examination setters are recruited from a cross-section of stakeholders both in training, industry and in practice to ensure a balanced mix of experience and question items. Setters are evaluated by the Examinations Board annually based on the relevance, reliability and validity of question items they submitted.

Setters are issued with a 'Guide to Setting' specifying, among other requirements, the general principles of item writing, use of appropriate action verbs and the key steps in the setting process.

The examination papers are reviewed by a Quality Assurance panel. The panel comprises an external Chief Examiner and internal moderators. The panel uses a separate but similar table of specification mapping the paper to, among other areas:

- The syllabus;
- Testing of achievement of learning outcomes;
- Balance of easy and difficult questions;
- Clarity and conciseness of questions;
- That irrelevant abilities are not tested and that certain abilities are not over tested;
- Action verbs match with the tasks allocated; and
- The paper can be completed within the allocated time.

An independent chief examiner also reviews the examination papers before they are administered.

A set pass mark, usually 50 per cent is maintained.

### **General feedback to students**

General feedback on performance (identified areas of difficulty and how many times the students were required to attempt the questions) is provided to candidates through posting of feedback on the students' portal and in a student newsletter.

### *Practical experience log*

A practical experience log is issued to each candidate as part of the pre-qualification program. The candidate completes the log under the guidance of a mentor who is a professional accountant. The log is issued to each candidate on registration.

### **Design targets the demonstration of professional values and ethics and professional skills**

Some of the compulsory competencies focus on professional values and ethics and professional skills as follows:

	<b>Competence category</b>	<b>Competence objective</b>	<b>Specific objectives</b>
	Professional ethics and values	Professional judgement and skepticism	Demonstrate the ability and understanding of professional judgement and skepticism
		Ethical principles	Application of professional ethics in day-to-day work
		Governance, risk management and internal control	Demonstrate the application of good governance and its interaction with risk management, internal control and public interest
	Professional skills	Leadership	Ability to lead a team
		Communication	Ability to effectively communicate internally and externally
		Managerial	Manage self and others to meet objectives effectively and efficiently
		Information technology	Use IT in day to day tasks to achieve efficiency and operational effectiveness
		Business strategy	Understand business strategy and actively develop solutions to achieve strategic objectives.
	<p>Elective competencies focus on technical areas depending on the aspiring professional accountant's area of work and specialisation, such as financial accounting and reporting, management accounting, financial management, taxation and audit and assurance.</p>		
	<p><b>Measuring and evidencing the achievement of learning outcomes</b></p> <p>Candidates are required to obtain at least 450 days of practical experience. A six-month review cycle for the program is included as part of monitoring and evaluation. The work of each candidate is considered to determine achievement of the learning outcomes. In reviewing a candidate's practical log various stakeholders are involved in assessing competencies, including the mentors, mentees, employers and the MB.</p>		
<b>Governance</b>	<p><b>Governance structures</b></p> <p>An independent, government appointed Examinations Board is responsible for implementing the examinations component of the pre-qualification program while the MB administers the practical experience program.</p>		

Both the Examinations Board and the MB are cross-represented in the respective boards for consultative and monitoring purposes. The Examinations Board representation includes the MB, the central government, institute of curriculum development and national qualification authority.

The Board approves the curriculum for implementation following validation by the MB. The Board also approves results for release to the candidates.

The curriculum is required to be registered and accredited by the National Qualifications Authority.

A semi-annual quality assurance review, aligned to the examinations cycle, is undertaken by the Quality Assurance panel on the processes.

### **Curriculum reviews undertaken**

A major review of the curriculum is undertaken by the Examinations Board in consultation with stakeholders once in every five years while a minor review is undertaken bi-annually. The review of the content of curriculum touching on management information systems is undertaken annually due to the rapid change in Information and Communication Technology.

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The objective of the IAESB is to serve the public interest by setting high-quality education standards for professional accountants and by facilitating the convergence of international and national education standards.

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