Continuing Professional Development Guidance: Updated Project Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an updated project plan for the development of an International Education Paper (IEP) designed to stimulate discussion and debate on the implementation of output and combination based approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

This paper is based in part on papers and a project proposal originally presented to the Education Committee in Dusseldorf in June 2005 and on a paper prepared for but not presented to the Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October 2005. It is hoped that this will provide useful, additional background material, especially for new members joining the IAESB at this meeting.

A number of questions for discussion are included at the end of this paper.

2. BACKGROUND

The IFAC Education Committee issued IES 7, “Continuing Professional Development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Competence”, with an effective date of 1st January 2006. The standard introduces the concepts of CPD as relevant, verifiable and measurable learning activities and outcomes and promotes the adoption of three different approaches – input, output, and combination. In June 2005 in Dusseldorf, the Education Committee agreed to develop further guidance materials for member bodies on the implementation of CPD.

Initial results of the member body compliance survey indicate that more than 80% of member bodies have a CPD requirement for their members. Significant activity is currently underway throughout the world to revise CPD policies to comply with IES 7, but CPD schemes may vary greatly in terms of their scope, focus and approach.
IES 7 promotes the adoption of an output based approach to CPD, measuring the development and maintenance of competence achieved through learning rather than measuring the various learning activities completed. The implementation and application of this type of approach is in its infancy, but the benefits of an output based approach appeal to many member bodies. A number of member bodies are experimenting and developing innovative approaches to the implementation of output and combination based approaches.

It was felt, therefore, that guidance on the implementation of combination and output based approaches to CPD would be welcomed by member bodies, and the Committee approved the establishment of a small group to develop a more detailed project proposal on this basis.

A number of options for providing CPD guidance were considered by the Education Committee, including:

i) a discussion or guidance paper with further elaboration or explanation of certain requirements of the standard and promoting discussion and debate on these

ii) providing responses to a range of frequently asked questions on the IFAC website;

iii) case study type examples of different approaches to CPD; and

iv) undertaking further research on output based approaches.

Following the Dusseldorf meeting, it was proposed to develop an International Education Paper for Professional Accountants (IEP) on the area of CPD discussing and generating debate regarding output and combination based approaches to CPD. This could include elements of (ii) and (iii) above. It was agreed that further research into output based approaches would not be considered at this time, however.

It was also agreed that work on the project would commence immediately, however due to other pressures on staff time the project was delayed, and the Committee was advised at its meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October 2005 that further work to develop a detailed project proposal and timetable had not been undertaken.

Since the proposed project was last discussed, a concern has been raised that while member bodies may be keen to implement output or combination based approaches to CPD, there is pressure from regulators to favour a more measurable, input based approach.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of the project is to develop an International Education Paper (IEP) designed to stimulate discussion and debate on the implementation of output and combination based approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

IEPs seek to promote discussion and debate on education and development issues, aiming to provoke consideration of the issues and to encourage comment and feedback so that the issues can be advanced or eventually resolved. They may explain, examine, analyze, or otherwise critically assess education issues and practices. In this way, IEPs are useful for exposing views, approaches and methods that are in the early stages of development and thus may be a useful forum for future standards and guidelines.
The explanation and definition of an IEP seems well suited to the nature of the proposed project on CPD. Given the relatively recent development of output and combination based approaches to CPD, the IAESB is not in a position to provide specific guidance on the implementation of good practice in this area (an International Education Guideline – IEG). The publication of an IEP would, however, assist in raising the level of debate and discussion which could in time lead to the development of specific guidance.

The IAESB and CAG, together with IFAC staff, will need to ensure therefore that the IEP does indeed provoke debate and discussion among member bodies, accounting educators, regulators and others, and thought should be given to ways in which the IEP can be successfully promoted.

CPD is not something only undertaken by accountants, however, and many professions have implemented, or are in process of implementing, CPD requirements. The scope of this project should not be restrictive, therefore, and should encompass the range of approaches adopted by IFAC member bodies, as well as those used by other professions, including law, medicine, teaching, engineering, and others. A broad range of examples drawn from a range of other professions will provide a full discussion and debate on output and combination based approaches in the IEP.

4. PROJECT TASK FORCE

A Task Force was appointed in Dusseldorf to undertake the project, of whom the remaining IAESB members are:

Monica Basso
Mel Berg (Chair)
Ulrich Maas
Anne Wickham

It is proposed that the existing Task Force be supplemented by additional members of the IAESB and their technical advisors, perhaps also including executive staff from member bodies involved in CPD. The IAESB Technical Manager will be closely involved with the project.

5. PROJECT OUTLINE

It is proposed that the Project Task Force conduct initial research on the range of CPD approaches adopted within the accountancy profession and other professions, including law, medicine, engineering and teaching.

The first stage of the initial research will be a literature review to identify research already undertaken in this area, focusing on the validity of input versus output based approaches to CPD. The aim of this stage of the research is to provide a foundation of knowledge to inform the development of a targeted survey of the accountancy profession and other professions.

The second stage of initial research will be a targeted survey, encompassing:
• The underlying basis on which approaches to CPD are based;
• The collection of information and examples of different approaches to CPD from a range of professions;
• Examples of output and combination based approaches to CPD;
• Monitoring and enforcement
• Implementation issues

Once completed, the initial research will be reviewed by the IAESB and used as the basis for drafting a subsequent IEP.

6. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The IFAC secretariat holds information regarding some selected member bodies who have adopted output and combination approaches to CPD, and these bodies should be included in the initial information gathering stage of the project.

Other sources of information may include:

• Other professional bodies (e.g. law, medicine, teaching, engineering);
• Governmental organizations and national regulators;
• Organizations in the learning and development field, such as the ASTD, IACET and CIPD.

IAESB members are invited to advise the Task Force of member bodies and other professions to which targeted requests might be made.

7. PROPOSED TIME LINE

1st March 2006  IAESB agrees project plan/timetable and appoints Task Force.

April-June 2006  Literature review and development of draft questionnaire by Task Force. List of targeted member bodies and other professions developed.

July 2006  IAESB approves draft questionnaire for mailing

1st August 2006  Questionnaire sent to targeted member bodies and professions.

30th September 2006  Deadline for questionnaire returns.

October 2006  Task Force reviews responses and provides comments on research summary and structure of proposed IEP. Update report for inclusion in agenda of November 2006 IAESB meeting.
November 2006  IAESB discusses report and agrees on process for drafting an IEP.

November-December 2006  Author (to be decided) drafts an IEP.

January 2007  Task Force comments on draft IEP.

February 2007  IAESB reviews and approves IEP.

April 2007  IEP is issued.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER GROUPS

Various other groups are likely to have an interest in this project, including:

- IFAC Board and the Compliance Advisory Panel (assisting and ensuring members are compliant with requirements of IES 7);
- IFAC Developing Nations Committee (in the implementation of robust CPD systems in professions in development around the world);
- Regulators (monitoring compliance with national CPD requirements);
- Multi-lateral donors and the development community (development of effective CPD systems in accountancy professions receiving support);
- IFAC member bodies;
- Other professions.

Consultation and regular reports to these groups is likely to be required at various stages of the project.

9. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

a) Does the CAG consider that guidance on the implementation of combination and output based approaches to CPD would be welcomed by, and useful to, IFAC member bodies?

b) Is the proposed focus on combination and output based approaches appropriate?

c) Can the CAG suggest member bodies and other professions with approaches to CPD that may be of interest to the project Task Force?

d) Can the CAG suggest effective ways in which the IAESB can ensure that the proposed IEP will provoke debate and discussion, and ways in which the output of this project can be best promoted?