

GUIDANCE PAPER ON IES 1, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Introduction

From July 1, 2014 IFAC member bodies are required to specify educational entry requirements to professional accounting education programs that will allow entrance to only those with a reasonable chance of successfully completing the professional accounting education program, while not representing excessive barriers to entry. The rationale for the principles used when setting educational entry requirements needs to be clearly articulated to all relevant stakeholders. This provides individuals considering a career as a professional accountant with information to help assess their own chances of successfully completing a professional accounting education program.

The setting of entry requirements to a professional accounting education program is a matter of judgment which is underpinned by the need to act in the public interest. The public interest is protected when member bodies thoughtfully consider their entry requirements and give careful consideration to the factors that contribute to successful completion of a professional accounting education program. This paper provides guidance to support IFAC member bodies in the implementation of International Education Standard™ (IES™) 1. For further implementation support see the [Frequently Asked Questions, the illustrative example, and the Perspectives Paper](#) on factors that influence successful completion of a professional accounting education program.

2. Recognizing the Context

Entry requirements can be considered within the inter-related context of the individual, their personal circumstances, and the environment in which the professional accounting education program is delivered and assessed. Each of these elements combine to influence successful completion of a professional accounting education program and this necessitates the requirement for each IFAC member body to determine their own set of entry requirements recognizing and accommodating differences in jurisdictions, regulations, and mandates.

A regular review of entry requirements enables IFAC member bodies to respond to change. Different entry requirements may be needed for varying educational contexts within one IFAC member body. These contexts could include a range of delivery mechanisms or the accommodation of alternate pathways and exit routes within a professional accounting education program.

The setting of entry requirements is not always the direct responsibility of IFAC member bodies. However, IFAC member bodies are encouraged to explore meaningful ways to influence the entry requirements to professional accounting education programs delivered by other entities such as universities or professional training organizations; providing those who enter a professional accounting education program with a reasonable chance of successful completion. In these situations, IFAC member bodies may articulate the requirements of IES 1 and provide relevant performance data so that entry requirements can be set at an appropriate level.

3. Defining a Reasonable Chance of Success

The definition of a reasonable chance of success is context specific. IFAC member bodies may consider all the key factors that are unique to them in determining what a reasonable chance of success is for their professional accounting education program. The determination of a reasonable chance of success for an individual is also specific to their personal circumstances, and the context in which they are considering entering a professional accounting education program.

4. Determining the Explanatory Factors for Success

Factors that are relevant in determining the likelihood of an individual's successful completion of a professional accounting education program, could include:

- (a) the economic, business, and regulatory environment, such as financial support for the professional accounting education program;
- (b) the prerequisite knowledge required, such as previous academic or experiential learning;
- (c) the expected learning to be acquired through the professional accounting education program;
- (d) the role of the professional accountant, such as the alignment of professional accounting education program objectives to career aspirations; and,
- (e) any other relevant factors such as individual aspects (personality, motivation and effort), study time available and support from peer networks and employers.

Once the factors that underpin success have been identified, IFAC member bodies will be better positioned to set entry requirements that are relevant to their specific program and will therefore only grant access to those individuals who have a reasonable chance of success thus protecting the public interest. More information on these factors is available in the [Perspectives paper](#) on determinants of performance.

In order to help identify these factors IFAC member bodies can compare the background data of individuals who have successfully completed the professional accounting education program (or levels within the program if multiple exit routes are offered). Comparing this with equivalent data on those who were unsuccessful can help identify the background factors which determine subsequent success. These factors will vary by IFAC member body but generally include previous academic performance measures from school and/or university or the demonstration of prerequisite knowledge acquired during a period of relevant practical experience.

Performing this exercise for each teaching delivery model can help identify how different modes of delivery may generate different success rates and explanatory factors.

Where IFAC member bodies have varying exit points from professional accounting education programs, entry requirements may be more flexible as individuals have an opportunity to exit with a market recognized qualification. These early exit routes reward a certain level of achievement and so provide individuals with recognition for their efforts even if they do not complete the full professional accounting education program.

IFAC member bodies can provide additional support mechanisms that are likely to enhance the chance of successful completion such as, additional classes, guidance, tutoring or formative assessment. Therefore, additional support can also be considered in the determination of appropriate entry requirements.

5. Informing Individuals Considering a Career as a Professional Accountant

IFAC member bodies can make widely available the specific criteria used to determine whether individuals considering a career as a professional accountant meet the entry requirements to a professional accounting education program. Individuals' expectations can be managed by providing examination statistics for all examination components, progression rates at each level of the professional accounting education program, and overall completion rates. This information could be further segmented dependent on:

- differential entry routes - such as a school leaver route, technician route, accounting degree entry route, a general degree entry route, practical experience entry route; and,
- differential models of delivery - such as face-to-face teaching and distance learning.

This information could be made widely available by, for example, publishing it in the brochures for professional accounting education programs or by including it on the websites of IFAC member bodies.

IFAC member bodies can assist individuals considering a career as a professional accountant by providing clear, honest, and accurate information about the educational program, including cost, content, level, assessment methods, exit points, and any resource requirements. Activity and commitment levels can also be articulated so that individuals considering a career as a professional accountant can consider whether they have a realistic chance of either, completing the professional accounting education program, or reaching a certain exit level within the program.

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The IAESB develops education standards, guidance, and information papers on pre-qualification education, training of professional accountants, and continuing professional education and development.

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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