

The International Education Standards

IES 1, *Entry Requirements to a Program of Professional Accounting Education*

IES 2, *Content of Professional Accounting Education Programs*

IES 3, *Professional Skills and General Education*

IES 4, *Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*

IES 5, *Practical Experience Requirement*

IES 6, *Assessment of Professional Capabilities and Competence*

IES 7, *Continuing Professional Development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Professional Competence*

IES 8, *Competence Requirements for Audit Professionals*

Introduction

The International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) continues its work on improving the clarity of its standards. The aim of this project is to revise and redraft the suite of eight International Education Standards (IESs) for IFAC member bodies and interested stakeholders in professional accounting education in accordance with its new clarity drafting conventions.

At its October 2009 meeting the IAESB agreed that all eight standards should be revised with the aim of:

- improving clarity;
- ensuring consistency with concepts of the *Framework for International Education Standards for Professional Accountants* (the Framework); and
- clarifying issues resulting from changes in the environment of accounting education and the experience gained from implementation of the IESs by IFAC member bodies.

The revision of the IESs will improve readability and ensure consistent application of each IES by reducing ambiguity about the requirements imposed on an IFAC member body. The IAESB does not envision developing new IESs and will identify areas requiring guidance to assist with adoption and implementation of the IESs.

As of November 2012 the IAESB has approved the following IESs:

- IES 1, *Entry Requirements to Professional Accounting Education Programs (Revised)* (*IES 1 prescribes the principles to be used when setting and communicating educational requirements for entry to professional accounting education programs.*)
- IES 5, *Initial Professional Development – Practical Experience (Revised)* (*IES 5 prescribes the practical experience required of aspiring professional accountants by the end of Initial Professional Development.*)
- IES 6, *Initial Professional Development – Assessment of Professional Competence (Revised)* (*IES 6 prescribes the requirements for the assessment of professional competence of aspiring professional accountants that need to be achieved by the end of Initial Professional Development.*)
- IES 7, *Continuing Professional Development (Redrafted)* (*IES 7 prescribes the continuing professional development (CPD) required for professional accountants to develop and maintain the professional competence necessary to provide high quality services to clients, employers, and other stakeholders, and thereby to strengthen public trust in the profession.*)

The current work plan envisages that all IESs will have been revised and redrafted, or redrafted only, by the 4th Quarter of 2013. The IAESB has provisionally agreed that the revised IESs will be effective for implementation for periods beginning on or after July 1, 2015. This date will depend on satisfactory progress being made, and will be amended to a later date should that prove necessary.

Project Scope

The IAESB is adopting a principles-based approach to develop the IESs using the educational concepts and principles of the Framework. Published in 2009, the Framework establishes the education concepts that the IAESB uses in its publications and provides an introduction to the IAESB publications and related IFAC member body obligations.

Key Concepts

The revised Standards on International Professional Development (IPD) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) establish the level of competence of a professional accountant, which the IAESB believes is the foundation upon which the public trust is sought. Therefore Professional Competence, IPD, CPD, and Assessment are the key education concepts which will guide the IAESB through its revision project.

Professional Competence

The overall objective of accounting education is to develop competent professional accountants. Professional competence is defined as the ability to perform a role to a defined standard. Professional competence consists of technical competence, professional skills, and professional values, ethics, and attitudes. The definition of professional competence (a) emphasizes the ability of individuals to perform to standards expected of professional accountants, and (b) requires an appropriate level of knowledge, skills, values, ethics, and attitudes to achieve that competence. The appropriate level of competence will vary, depending on such factors as the complexity of the environment, the complexity of tasks, the variety of tasks, required specialist knowledge, influence on the work of others, reliance on the work of others, level of autonomy, and required level of judgment.

Initial Professional Development

Initial Professional Development (IPD) is learning and development through which individuals first develop competence leading to performing a role in the accountancy profession. IPD includes general education, professional accounting education, practical experience, and assessment, as follows:

- General education: Broad-based education to develop the skills necessary as a foundation for coping with the demands of professional accounting education and practical experience.
- Professional accounting education: Education and training that builds on general education, and imparts professional (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (c) values, ethics, and attitudes.
- Assessment: Measurement of professional competence developed throughout learning and development.
- Practical Experience: Practical experience refers to workplace activities that are relevant to developing competence.

In addition to education, practical experience, and training, the term learning and development includes activities such as (a) coaching, (b) networking, (c) observation, (d) reflection, and (e) self-directed and unstructured gaining of knowledge.

Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is learning and development that maintains and develops competence to enable professional accountants to perform their roles. CPD provides continual development of the (a) professional skills, (b) professional values, ethics and attitudes, and (c) the technical competence achieved during IPD. In addition, professional accountants may take on new roles during their careers that require new competences. In such cases, CPD that includes many of the same elements as IPD may be necessary for roles that require additional breadth and/or depth of knowledge, skills, and values.

Assessment

Assessment is the measurement of professional competence developed through learning and development. During IPD a range of assessment activities may be undertaken to assess specific areas of professional competence, and the outcomes of these assessments will form part of the formal assessment of professional competence undertaken before the end of IPD.

There are different measurement approaches that can be employed to assess the effectiveness of learning and development. They include:

- Output measures: An output-based approach focuses on whether the professional accountant has developed the specified competence, which can be assessed by a variety of means, including workplace performance, workplace simulations, written examinations, and self-assessment; and

- Input measures: An input-based measure focuses on the investment made in learning and development, for example, the number of hours an individual is expected to attend a course or the subject areas covered.

The IAESB expects that the revision and redrafting of the suite of eight IESs will clarify the obligations of IFAC member bodies and other interested stakeholders involved with the development, delivery, and assessment of professional accountancy education. The suite of revised IESs is also expected also contribute to other desirable outcomes, including:

- Reduction in international differences in the requirements to qualify and work as a professional accountant;
- Facilitation of the global mobility of professional accountants; and
- Provision of international benchmarks against which IFAC member bodies can measure themselves.

For more information, please view the IAESB website at www.ifac.org/Education, or contact

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