INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARD

IES 1

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO A PROGRAM OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING EDUCATION

CONTENTS

Purpose and Scope of this Standard

1.   This Standard (IES) lays down the entry requirements for an IFAC member body's program of professional accounting education and practical experience. It also provides some commentary on how to assess entry-level qualifications.

2.   The aim of this IES is to ensure that students hoping to become professional accountants have an educational background that enables them to have a reasonable possibility of achieving success in their studies, qualifying examinations and practical experience period. To fulfill this requirement, member bodies may require certain entrants to take pre-entry proficiency tests.

Introduction

3.   Fundamentally, the quality of a profession cannot be maintained and improved if the individuals who enter it are not prepared to meet the necessary standards. All IFAC member bodies should try to attract the best quality individuals to the study of accountancy. Ultimately, the quality of the profession depends on the quality of the candidates it can attract. Entry requirements are the first step in this process. Higher entry requirements may allow professional education and practical experience requirements to be met in a shorter period of time.

4.   Definitions and explanations of the key terms used in the IESs are set out in the *Framework for International Education Standards for Professional Accountants* and the *IAESB Glossary of Terms*.

Effective Date

5.   This IES is effective from January 1, 2005.

Entry Requirements to a Program of Professional Accounting Education

6.   **For an individual seeking to begin a program of professional accounting education leading to membership of an IFAC member body, the entry requirement should be at least equivalent to that for admission into a recognized university degree program or its equivalent.**

7.   An individual needs to bring to a program of professional accounting education an appropriate level of prior education and learning to provide the foundation necessary to acquire the professional knowledge, professional skills, and professional values, ethics and attitudes needed to become a professional accountant.

8.   Candidates starting on a program of professional accountancy education will have a certain mix of knowledge, skills, and professional values, ethics and attitudes. The extent of these capabilities will determine the entry point of

candidates into professional programs. The lower the requirement at the point of entry, the more the program of professional accounting education has to cover.

9. The starting point of a program of professional accounting education can vary. Many programs of professional accounting education start at the post-graduate level. Other programs start at the immediate post-secondary education level or at some point at a higher education level that is below that of an undergraduate degree. Many of these programs are organized by professional bodies themselves rather than by universities or colleges. Some programs recognize work experience, mature students, candidates joining the program part way through their career, and other types of learning.

10. Whichever route is chosen, the entry requirements adopted should fit together consistently with the overall program of professional accounting education laid down by the professional body concerned. It is important that candidates from all possible educational routes, whether starting from secondary, further or higher education, achieve a comparable level of professional competence at the point of qualification. The entry level needs to be high enough to provide assurance of an individual's likely success in the program of professional accounting education.

11. The assessment of equivalence of qualifications to university degree entry standard should be cross-checked with standard reference sources, together with information available to the member bodies of IFAC (see note below). Even with these aids, evaluating qualifications can be complicated and difficult, with an accurate evaluation possible only after reviewing specific, detailed information about courses and curricula.

12. University degree programs may be recognized by statute, an approved non-statutory body or the market. Recognition and evaluation of degree programs can focus on the content, length and other quality aspects.

Note:

The length of degree programs can vary. In an attempt to standardize practice, the Bologna Declaration, signed by 29 European countries in 1999, supported the adoption of two main types of degrees – undergraduate and graduate. Undergraduate degrees are expected to take at least three years to complete. The NARIC database compares the standard of qualifications to degree entry standards, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees (see below).

Standard reference sources used by member bodies include the following:

International Comparisons, published by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre in the UK (NARIC), under contract to the UK government. It includes both secondary and higher-level qualifications worldwide and covers some 180 countries. NARIC helps to identify qualifications that are equivalent to a university degree and those that are equivalent to a university entry standard. The

UK NARIC is part of a network of NARICs throughout the European Union.

The World of Learning, published by Europa Publications, lists institutions worldwide that are considered to be higher education institutions, including universities and colleges.

In a large number of countries, "Country Education Profiles" together with an indication of the standard of the degrees, are published by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), a branch of the Australian Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training.

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