

**Final Pronouncement  
March 2025**

*International Education Standards™*

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**Framework for International  
Education Standards for  
Professional Accountants and  
Aspiring Professional  
Accountants (2015)**

**IES™**



## **About IFAC**

*IFAC, by connecting and uniting its members, makes the accountancy profession truly global.*

*IFAC member organizations are champions of integrity and professional quality, and proudly carry their membership as a badge of international recognition.*

*IFAC and its members work together to shape the future of the profession through learning, innovation, a collective voice, and commitment to the public interest.*

## **About the International Education Standards**

The International Education Standards (IESs), issued by IFAC, provide a globally recognized baseline for professional accountancy education. IFAC member organizations—champions of professional quality and integrity—use the IESs to develop strong, ethical, and competent accountants who serve the public interest. By working together, IFAC and its members shape the future of the profession through learning, innovation, and a collective commitment to excellence.

# FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION PRONOUNCEMENTS FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS AND ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS (2015)

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## PART ONE—INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE, AND SCOPE

### Introduction

1. This *Framework for International Education Standards for Professional Accountants and Aspiring Professional Accountants* (the “Framework”) establishes the concepts that the International Federation of Accountants (“IFAC”) uses in its publications. The Framework also provides an introduction to IFAC publications and related obligations of member organizations.
2. IFAC acts in the public interest to raise the level of confidence and trust of stakeholders in the work of professional accountants.
3. IFAC’s mission is to serve the public interest by strengthening the worldwide accountancy profession through the development and enhancement of professional accounting education. IFAC is supported in this work by the International Panel on Accountancy Education (“IPAE”). IFAC seeks to achieve its mission through the development, adoption, and implementation of International Education Standards (“IESs”). The IESs improve the quality of professional accounting education worldwide by prescribing requirements for:
  - Entry to professional accounting education programs;
  - Initial Professional Development (“IPD”) of aspiring professional accountants; and
  - Continuing Professional Development (“CPD”) of professional accountants.
4. The accountancy profession includes, but is not limited to:
  - Preparing, analyzing, and reporting relevant and faithfully represented financial and non-financial information;
  - Partnering in decision making, and in formulating and implementing organizational strategies;
  - Auditing financial and non-financial information, and providing other assurance and advisory services; and
  - Preparing and analyzing relevant tax information.
5. The accountancy profession serves the financial and, in some circumstances, the non-financial information needs of a broad range of decision makers including, but not limited to (a) the public, (b) present and potential investors, (c) management and employees within organizations, (d) suppliers and creditors, (e) customers, and (f) government authorities. The accountancy profession’s ability to satisfy users’ information needs contributes to an efficient economy that creates value to society.
6. Development, adoption, and implementation of IESs provide an effective approach to developing professional competence. Other desirable outcomes include:
  - Reducing international differences in the requirements to perform a role as a professional accountant;
  - Facilitating the global mobility of professional accountants; and
  - Providing international benchmarks of good practice for professional accounting education.
7. Terminology in accounting education is not universal; the same term might be used in different ways in various jurisdictions. Definitions and explanations of the key terms used in the Framework and IESs are set out in the *Glossary of Terms for International Education Standards*.

### Purpose of the Framework

8. The Framework provides a conceptual base for IFAC and the IPAE to continue developing and

supporting adoption and implementation of the IESs. The Framework assists IFAC member organizations in their activities related to the learning and development of professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants.

9. The Framework is also useful to other stakeholders who support the learning and development of professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants. These other stakeholders include:
  - Universities, employers, and other stakeholders who play a part in the design, development, delivery, and assessment of professional accounting education programs for professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants;
  - Regulators who are responsible for oversight of the accountancy profession;
  - Government authorities with responsibility for legal and regulatory requirements related to professional accounting education;
  - Professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants who manage their own learning and development; and
  - Any other stakeholders interested in the work of IFAC and its approach to developing publications on professional accounting education.
10. The benefits of the Framework include:
  - An efficient and effective standard-setting process by providing a conceptual base for IFAC's publications;
  - IESs that are consistent, because they are based on a common set of concepts relevant to professional accounting education; and
  - Increased transparency and accountability of IFAC for its decisions, because the concepts underlying IFAC's decisions are included in the Framework.

## Scope of the Framework

11. The Framework describes the learning concepts underpinning the IESs; however, the Framework does not establish requirements that apply to IFAC member organizations. IFAC and the IPAE apply the concepts set out in the Framework when developing the IESs. The concepts in this Framework may also be applied to other aspects of professional accounting education not covered by a specific IES.
12. For the purposes of the IESs and other IFAC publications, IFAC defines a professional accountant as an individual who achieves, demonstrates, and further develops professional competence to perform a role in the accountancy profession and who is required to comply with a code of ethics as directed by a professional accountancy organization or a licensing authority.
13. Professional accountancy organizations include, but are not limited to, IFAC member organizations. When a professional accountancy organization or a licensing authority is not an IFAC member organization, the IESs serve as an international benchmark of good practice.
14. A code of ethics establishes a set of ethical principles for professional accountants. A code of ethics will ordinarily comprise the *International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards)* ("IESBA Code"), whether in its entirety or used as a basis for a locally developed code of ethics such that the standards therein are no less stringent than those stated in the IESBA Code.
15. IFAC defines an aspiring professional accountant as an individual who has commenced a professional accounting education program as part of IPD.

16. IFAC may also establish requirements for roles that are widely practiced by professional accountants in the accountancy profession or that are a matter of public interest.

## **PART TWO—EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS**

### **Professional Competence**

17. The overall objectives of professional accounting education are to (a) develop the professional competence of aspiring professional accountants, and (b) develop and maintain the professional competence of professional accountants.
18. Professional competence is the ability to perform a role to a defined standard. Professional competence goes beyond knowledge of principles, standards, concepts, facts, and procedures; it is the integration and application of technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes.

### **Learning Outcomes, Competence Areas, and Proficiency Levels**

19. A number of the IESs include learning outcomes that establish the content and the depth of knowledge, understanding, and application required for each specified competence area. Learning outcomes can be achieved within the context of a work environment or a professional accounting education program.
20. An example of a learning outcome for the technical competence of a professional accountant working in a financial accounting role is to “prepare general purpose financial reports, including consolidated financial statements, in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (“IFRSs”) or other relevant standards”. Achieving this learning outcome requires knowledge of the IFRSs, the ability to assess their relevance to the situation, and the ability to apply the requirements of the relevant IFRSs.
21. The IESs include competence areas that are categories for which a set of related learning outcomes can be specified. Examples include *Financial accounting and reporting* and *Management accounting*.
22. Within IPD, a competence area is assigned a level of proficiency that describes the context in which the relevant learning outcomes are expected to be achieved. The level of proficiency for a competence area is based on consideration of the ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty of the work environment. Appendix 1 provides details of the foundation, intermediate, and advanced levels of proficiency. These levels describe the typical progression that occurs in the development of professional competence throughout the career of a professional accountant. The IESs prescribe the level of proficiency for competence areas to be achieved by the end of IPD.
23. An IFAC member organization may (a) include additional competence areas; (b) increase the level of proficiency for competence areas; or (c) develop additional learning outcomes. For example, these changes may be necessary when an IFAC member organization prepares professional accountants or aspiring professional accountants to work within a particular industry sector or for a particular role.

### **Learning and Development**

24. Learning and development is an ongoing process of developing and maintaining professional competence throughout the career of a professional accountant. IFAC defines primary types of learning and development as follows:

### *Education<sup>1</sup>*

Education is a structured and systematic process aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and other capabilities; a process that is typically but not exclusively conducted in academic environments.

### *Training*

Training describes learning and development activities that complement education and practical experience. Training emphasizes practical application, and is usually conducted in the workplace or a simulated work environment.

### *Practical Experience*

Practical experience refers to workplace and other activities that are relevant to developing professional competence.

25. In addition to education, training, and practical experience, learning and development activities can include informal learning such as (a) mentoring and coaching, (b) networking, (c) observation, feedback and reflective activities, and (d) self-development activities.
26. The extent to which the different types of learning and development are used may vary. For example, during the initial stages of IPD more emphasis may be placed on education including professional accounting education, than in later stages of learning and development. During CPD the balance may shift more to learning and development through practical experience and training.

## **General Education**

27. General education (a) develops essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes, (b) helps prepare an individual for entry to a professional accounting education program, and (c) supports lifelong learning and development.
28. General education helps professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants integrate technical competence, professional skills, and professional values, ethics, and attitudes developed through professional accounting education. It supports the development of decision making skills, judgment, and skepticism. Examples of general education topics include, but are not limited to (a) understanding ideas and events in history, (b) knowledge of different cultures, and (c) awareness of economic, political and social forces in the world.
29. General education may be obtained in a number of different ways and within different settings. General education commences before entry into a professional accounting education program and can continue during IPD and CPD.

## **Initial Professional Development**

30. IPD is the learning and development through which aspiring professional accountants first develop professional competence leading to performing a role as a professional accountant.

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<sup>1</sup> IFAC uses the term “education” in its own title and publications; however, its terms of reference include the entire learning and development process.

31. IPD includes professional accounting education, practical experience, and assessment. IFAC defines these terms as follows:

*Professional Accounting Education*

Education and training that build on general education, and develop (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes.

*Practical Experience*

Practical experience refers to workplace and other activities that are relevant to developing professional competence.

*Assessment*

Evaluation of professional competence developed through learning and development.

32. IPD continues until aspiring professional accountants can demonstrate the professional competence required for a role as a professional accountant. One result of demonstrating this professional competence may be admission to membership in an IFAC member organization.
33. Qualification, licensing or certification ("qualification") is the formal recognition of an individual having attained a professional designation, or having been admitted to membership in an IFAC member organization. Internationally, there are significant legal and regulatory differences that determine the point of qualification of professional accountants and it may occur from very early to very late in a career. Each IFAC member organization may define the appropriate relationship between the end of IPD and the point of qualification for its members.

## **Continuing Professional Development**

34. CPD is the learning and development that develops and maintains professional competence to enable professional accountants to continue to perform their roles competently. CPD provides continuing development of the learning outcomes for (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes which were achieved during IPD.
35. Change is a significant characteristic of the environment in which professional accountants work, requiring them to develop and maintain their professional competence throughout their careers. Pressures for change come from many sources including, but not limited to, (a) public expectations, (b) globalization, (c) advances in technology, (d) business complexity, (e) societal changes, and (f) increase in regulation and oversight. As a result, continuous learning is integral to CPD as professional accountants need actively to pursue the education, training, knowledge, and skills which they need to anticipate and adapt to changes in processes, technology, professional standards, regulatory requirements, employer demands, and other areas.
36. Professional competence requirements may change as professional accountants take on new roles during their careers. For example, a professional accountant in business may wish to become an accounting educator; or an accounting technician may wish to work in an audit role. CPD that includes many of the same elements as IPD also develops the additional breadth and depth of (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes which may be necessary when moving into a new role.
37. CPD includes practical experience that provides individuals with the opportunity to develop their professional competence within the workplace. As a professional accountant's career progresses, emphasis tends to shift from structured learning activities to practical experience and informal learning.

## **Assessment, Measurement, and Monitoring**

38. Assessment, measurement, and monitoring are central to demonstrating professional competence



and determining that learning and development has been effective.

39. Assessment is used to gather evidence that the individual being assessed has demonstrated the professional competence to perform a role as a professional accountant. In addition, assessment provides valuable information that may be used to improve the quality of professional accounting education programs. Effective assessment activities achieve high levels of validity, sufficiency, reliability, equity, and transparency. A mix of different assessment activities is often adopted to assess professional competence.
40. Assessment includes the measurement of professional competence. In the context of assessment, measurement includes evaluating, and providing verifiable evidence of the achievement of (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes.
41. Measurement approaches focus on measuring observable outputs (for example, workplace performance, workplace simulations, written examinations, and self-assessment), quantifiable inputs (for example, CPD hours or equivalent learning units), or a combination of both.
42. Monitoring is the systematic process of collecting, reviewing, and confirming the evidence that demonstrates professional competence has been developed or maintained.

## **PART THREE—IFAC PUBLICATIONS**

### **International Education Standards**

43. The IESs are authoritative and are used by IFAC member organizations when setting education requirements for professional accountants and aspiring professional accountants.
44. The IESs establish requirements for (a) entry to professional accounting education programs, (b) IPD of aspiring professional accountants, and (c) CPD of professional accountants.
45. IFAC is conscious of (a) the diversity of culture and language, educational, legal, and social systems globally, and (b) the variety of roles performed by professional accountants. The IESs have been developed as principle-based standards that provide IFAC member organization flexibility in implementing the IES's requirements. Each IFAC member organization needs to determine how best to implement the requirements of the IESs and is subject to the *Statements of Membership Obligations* ("SMOs"). IFAC also recognizes that individual IFAC member organizations may adopt learning and development requirements that go beyond the IESs.
46. The process that IFAC follows in developing its standards is set out in the *IFAC Standards Development Framework*.
47. The IESs are written in accordance with the *IES Drafting Conventions* that are set out in Appendix 2.

### **Other IFAC Publications**

48. In support of the IESs, IFAC issues other publications and additional support material to assist IFAC member organizations in achieving good practice in learning and development.

## **PART FOUR—IFAC MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS**

### **IFAC Membership Obligations Relating to IESs**

49. Individual IFAC member organizations determine the competences and criteria for membership that are appropriate to the professional accountant roles performed by their members. The SMOs set out the obligations of IFAC member organizations and associates. Obligations related to the IESs may be found in *Statement of Membership Obligations 2, International Education Standards for Professional Accountants and Aspiring Professional Accountants* ("SMO 2").

50. Some IFAC member organizations are subject to the requirements of law or regulation within their jurisdictions. IESs cannot legally override educational requirements or restrictions placed on individual IFAC member organizations by such laws or regulations. In cases where IESs set a higher requirement than laws or regulations, SMO 2 requires that, where the IFAC member organization has no responsibility or shared responsibility for areas covered by the IESs, it uses its best endeavors to comply with the requirements of the IESs. In these instances, the IFAC member organization would (a) determine its level of responsibility, (b) assume the appropriate set of actions to best meets its obligations under SMO 2, and (c) encourage those responsible to implement the requirements of the IESs into relevant laws or regulations.

## DESCRIPTION OF LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY

This description of levels of proficiency supports the use of learning outcomes in the IESs and other publications. It provides descriptions of three levels of proficiency. These descriptions, together with the learning outcomes, provide information to help member organizations design their professional accounting education programs for a variety of professional accounting roles and specializations.

Level of Proficiency	Description
Foundation	<p>Typically, learning outcomes in a competence area focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining, explaining, summarizing, and interpreting the underlying principles and theories of relevant areas of technical competence to complete tasks while working under appropriate supervision;</li> <li>Performing assigned tasks by using the appropriate professional skills;</li> <li>Recognizing the importance of professional values, ethics, and attitudes in performing assigned tasks;</li> <li>Solving simple problems, and referring complex tasks or problems to supervisors or those with specialized expertise; and</li> <li>Providing information and explaining ideas in a clear manner, using oral and written communications.</li> </ul> <p>Learning outcomes at the foundation level relate to work environments that are characterized by low levels of ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty.</p>
Intermediate	<p>Typically, learning outcomes in a competence area focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independently applying, comparing, and analyzing underlying principles and theories from relevant areas of technical competence to complete work assignments and make decisions;</li> <li>Combining technical competence and professional skills to complete work assignments;</li> <li>Applying professional values, ethics, and attitudes to work assignments; and</li> <li>Presenting information and explaining ideas in a clear manner, using oral and written communications, to accounting and non-accounting stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>Learning outcomes at the intermediate level relate to work environments that are characterized by moderate levels of ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty.</p>
Advanced	<p>Typically, learning outcomes in a competence area focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selecting and integrating principles and theories from different areas of technical competence to manage and lead projects and work assignments, and to make recommendations appropriate to stakeholder needs;</li> <li>Integrating technical competence and professional skills to manage and lead projects and work assignments;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making judgments on appropriate courses of action drawing on professional values, ethics, and attitudes;</li> <li>• Assessing, researching, and resolving complex problems with limited supervision;</li> <li>• Anticipating, consulting appropriately, and developing solutions to complex problems and issues; and</li> <li>• Consistently presenting and explaining relevant information in a persuasive manner to a wide- range of stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>Learning outcomes at the advanced level relate to work environments that are characterized by high levels of ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty.</p>
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## IES DRAFTING CONVENTIONS

### Language and Structure

In developing the IESs, the selection of appropriate wording will be guided, wherever possible, by these *IES Drafting Conventions* and the *Glossary of Terms for International Education Standards* (the “Glossary”). Definitions found in the pronouncements are included in the Glossary. The Glossary is intended to support translation, interpretation, and application. The definitions are not intended to override definitions that may be established for other purposes, whether in law, regulation, or otherwise.

The structure of the IESs shall be organized to include the following as separate sections: Introduction, Objective, Requirements, and Explanatory Material.

#### *Introduction*

The introductory material includes information regarding the scope and effective date that provides context relevant to a proper understanding of each IES.

#### *Objective*

The IESs contain a clear statement of the objective of the standard. The objective assists an IFAC member organization to understand the overall aim of the standard, and what needs to be accomplished, as well as to decide whether more needs to be done to achieve the objective.

#### *Requirements*

The objective is supported by clearly stated requirements that are necessary to achieve the objective. Requirements are always expressed using the term “shall.”

#### *Explanatory Material*

The explanatory material is intended to explain the scope, objective, and requirements in more detail. The explanatory material assists IFAC member organization in the application of the requirements and may include examples of how to meet them. The explanatory material does not impose any additional requirements; its purpose is to assist in application.



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