

# ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

## Continuing Professional Development Guidelines

CREATING WORLD CLASS  
ACCOUNTANTS



## Introduction

AIA believes it is the responsibility of professional accountants to develop and maintain professional competence necessary to provide high quality services to clients, employers and other stakeholders. In support of this belief, AIA has adopted the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) International Education Standard for Professional Accountants 7 "Continuing Professional Development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Professional Competence" (IES 7).

IFAC IES 7 became effective for IFAC member bodies from 1 January 2006 and can be downloaded from the CPD section of the AIA website – [www.aia worldwide.com](http://www.aia worldwide.com) – or directly from the IFAC website – [www.ifac.org](http://www.ifac.org).

## Contents

Professional responsibility	3
Lifelong learning	3
CPD for all	4
Requirements	5
Measurement	6
Learning activities	8
Plan your development	9
Monitoring and enforcement	14
Exemption from the requirements	14
Affiliate members	15
Academic members	15
Members in practice	16
What AIA will do to help	17
Index	18

## 3 Professional responsibility

The knowledge needed to function effectively as a professional accountant in public practice, industry, commerce, education and the public sector continues to expand and change at a rapid rate. As a professional accountant you face increased knowledge and skill expectations. You, as well as AIA, also face unprecedented scrutiny about the quality of internal control, governance, financial statements and independent audits. These pressures apply to professional accountants in all sectors.

In addition, the need to be competitive in a worldwide economy has prompted a more intense focus on the role and responsibilities of professional accountants in entities of all types. Continued development of professional competence and lifelong learning are critical if the professional accountant is to meet these expectations.

As a professional association, AIA has a responsibility to ensure that you continue to develop and maintain the competence demanded by your professional role and the users of your services. The AIA CPD programme is designed to help you to meet your professional and ethical commitment to lifelong learning. These guidelines set out what you are required to do and what AIA will do to help you meet these requirements.

## Lifelong learning

CPD is an integral component of your continued membership of AIA and contributes to the accountancy profession's objective of providing high-quality services to meet the needs of the public. The process of lifelong learning commences as soon as you have completed the AIA examinations and continues throughout your career. CPD is an extension of the education process that led to your qualification as a professional accountant. The professional knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitudes gained on qualification should continue to develop and be refined appropriately for your individual professional activities and responsibilities.

## CPD for all

4

AIA requires all of its members to develop and maintain competence relevant and appropriate to their area of work and professional responsibilities. It is primarily your responsibility to develop and maintain your competence. CPD is applicable for all professional accountants, regardless of sector or size of business in which they operate, because:

- Professional accountants have an ethical obligation of due care to their clients, employers and relevant stakeholders and need to demonstrate their ability to discharge this responsibility in a competent manner.
- Professional accountants hold positions of importance involving financial reporting, public accountability and maintaining public trust.
- The public relies on the designation and professional standing of the professional accountant. All professional accountants carry the professional designation and any lack of competence or unethical behaviour has the same consequences to the profession, irrespective of the sector or role in which they operate.
- Employers hiring professional accountants rely to an extent on the professional designation as proof of professional competence.

## Requirements

5

- You must ensure you have the knowledge and skills to fulfil your role and responsibilities.
- You are required to complete at least 120 units of relevant CPD activity in each rolling three-year period, of which 60 units should be verifiable.
- You must complete a minimum of 20 units of verifiable CPD each year.
- You should complete a continuous record of the CPD activities you have undertaken. This can be completed online through the AIA website or paper CPD Records are available on request.
- You are required to update the online CPD record and complete and submit an Annual CPD Declaration (accessible through the secure members' area) before 1 October each year. If you do not have internet access, please contact Membership Services for an Annual Declaration to be sent out. This should be returned to AIA by 1 October.
- You should maintain evidence supporting your CPD Record for each rolling three-year period. As part of AIA's monitoring process, a sample of returns will be selected and AIA may contact you to ask for evidence demonstrating that CPD units have been completed and are relevant to your development needs.

## Measurement

AIA measures your CPD activity in units, each unit is equivalent to one hour of classroom time. You are required to complete at least 120 units of relevant CPD activity in each rolling three-year period, of which 60 units should be verifiable. You must complete a minimum of 20 units of verifiable CPD each year. Units will be considered to be verifiable if you can prove that you were involved in an acceptable CPD learning activity. Acceptable CPD is a learning activity that is relevant to your current or future development needs. Units will be considered unverifiable if you are unable to prove that the CPD learning activity has taken place, for example general reading.

### Rolling three-year period

The first rolling three-year period runs from 1 October 2006 to 30 September 2009. The next rolling three-year period runs from 1 October 2007 to 30 September 2010 and so on. If you have joined AIA in the middle of a year, the CPD requirements for the first year of the first rolling three-year period are pro rata.

6

7

### Example

1 Oct 06-30 Sep 07	1 Oct 07-30 Sep 08	1 Oct 08-30 Sep 09	1 Oct 09-30 Sep 10	1 Oct 10-30 Sep 11
12UV + 21V = 33	16UV + 20V = 36	28UV + 25V = 53		
1: 56UV + 66V = 122				
	16UV + 20V = 36	28UV + 25V = 53	9UV + 23V = 32	
	2: 53UV + 68V = 121			
		28UV + 25V = 53	9UV + 23V = 32	15UV + 20V = 35
		3: 52UV + 68V = 120		

UV = unverifiable units  
V = verifiable units

## Learning activities

8

The following list provides examples of different learning activities you may undertake as part of your CPD. Any of these could be carried out by electronic means and e-learning opportunities.

- Participation in courses, conferences and seminars.
- Self-learning modules or organised on-the-job training for new software systems, procedures or techniques applicable to a professional role.
- Published professional or academic writing.
- Participation and work on technical committees.
- Teaching a course or CPD session in an area related to professional responsibilities.
- Formal study related to professional responsibilities.
- Participation as a speaker in conferences, briefing sessions or discussion groups.
- Writing technical articles, papers and books.
- Research, including reading professional literature or journals, for application in a professional role.
- Professional re-examination or formal testing.

You should strive to achieve a balance of activities, one single, repetitive activity should not constitute your total CPD activity.

## Plan your development

9

As a professional accountant it is your responsibility to look after your career development and to use your judgement to make decisions on the relevance of your CPD activities. There are two important points to consider when planning CPD:

- Identify what knowledge and skills you need for your current role or career aspirations; and
- Decide the best way you can develop in the areas you have identified.

The amount of assistance different members might need to identify relevant learning and development will vary. You may already work through your development needs on a regular basis with your employer, you may be self-employed or employed by an organisation that doesn't address all of these issues with you. Whatever your position, the following tools may assist you to identify learning and development needs and plan ways of addressing these needs.

### Personal development plan

AIA recommends that you formulate a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to help plan your CPD and select activities which are relevant to your role and responsibilities.

If appropriate, your PDP should be drawn up in collaboration with your employer, for example, if your employer has a Training and Development Policy, your PDP should refer to this document.

If you are self-employed, a sole practitioner or a partner in a practice and you do not have a Training and Development Policy in place, you can get information and advice on how to develop such a policy from your local

Business Link in the UK or equivalent organisation overseas. Alternatively you could seek assistance from a private training and development company.

10

Your PDP will assist you in identifying training and development needs and ways in which to meet those needs. Your PDP should:

- Enable you to undertake your present role to a satisfactory standard;
- Enable you to develop skills and competencies to reach a standard of excellence in your current role and develop your abilities for the future;
- Link all training and development to both your business and personal objectives.

In compiling a PDP, you are encouraged to review your current skills and competences against a target. Once you have identified your development needs, you can then source relevant learning activities to help develop the required skills and competences.

To identify the knowledge and skills required of you, it is important to consider both what is expected of you in your current role and what knowledge and skills you might need in the future. There may be areas of knowledge or skills that you feel you particularly need to develop or that you should focus on.

Once you have gone through the process of deciding on the areas that are important for you to develop in, the next stage of the process is to consider the different ways you can achieve your development. For example, you may learn best in a particular environment or prefer a specific learning style.

11

When formulating your PDP, ask yourself the following questions:

- What development/training/further education do I require?
- How is it to be delivered?
- How does it link to my organisation's objectives?
- How will it improve my performance/competence?
- Why is the development needed?
- What do I hope to gain from the development activity? (This helps to measure impact).
- How will I measure the effectiveness of my investment? (e.g. feedback at the end of the activity, observation of performance, provision of opportunity to use the new skills).
- Is the development Mandatory [M], Essential [E] or Desirable [D]? (Using these codes should help you to establish your main priorities and ensure that all the mandatory and essential development is achieved).

### Competence map

A competence map can assist you to identify training and development needs before identifying relevant learning activities. The map can assist you to assess your current level of competence and identify targets for development.

A competence map is essentially a list of competences that are needed to perform your role and responsibilities effectively. It is not expected that you will already have achieved all of the competences in the map, but the goals should be challenging, yet achievable.

There are three types of competency, namely knowledge, skills and attributes. Knowledge, for example, might relate to standards and regulations, skills could relate to the ability to prepare financial statements and attributes would include team working and communications skills. Another way to look at the competences is as task-related competences (such as technical skills and knowledge) and function-related competences (such as behavioural skills and an ability to work with others at all levels).

12

When comparing your competences with the competency map there are three levels that could be achieved: knowledgeable, proficient and advanced.

At the knowledgeable level you will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the particular competence and an understanding of how it is used in the workplace, but you will be working under supervision.

At the proficient level you should demonstrate a sound level of understanding of the required competence, experience and have the confidence to work unsupervised.

At the advanced level you must be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the competence, be capable of performing the competency fully and independently and can act as an advisor, supervisor or trainer.

Finally, your competence map should include ratings of the relative importance of each competency and an indication of whether each is mandatory, essential or desirable.

## 13 Reporting

### CPD record

You should keep a continuous record of the CPD activities you have undertaken. AIA recommends that you fill in your Record as and when you complete CPD activities. Your Record should be up to date prior to 1 October each year.

You should maintain evidence supporting your CPD Record for each rolling three-year period. As part of AIA's monitoring process, a sample of returns will be selected and AIA may contact you to ask for evidence demonstrating that CPD units have been completed and are relevant to your development needs.

You must also, unless you qualify for exemption or there are special circumstances which affect your ability to complete CPD, complete and submit online an Annual CPD Declaration confirming that you have met AIA CPD requirements or the CPD requirements of another IFAC Member Body. Page 15 of these guidelines provides further information on exemption criteria and special circumstances.

You can complete your Annual CPD Declaration and CPD Record online through the members' area of the AIA website. If you do not have internet access please contact Membership Services, for a paper copy. Paper copies must be completed and returned to AIA by 1 October.

## Monitoring and enforcement

All members, except those granted exemption, are required to meet the CPD requirements. This includes completing the required units in relevant CPD activities, submitting an Annual CPD Declaration, completing the CPD Record and retaining evidence of CPD activities undertaken for each rolling three-year period.

As part of AIA's monitoring process, AIA will periodically audit a sample of members to check compliance. In this event you will be required to provide evidence of the CPD activities undertaken.

Members who do not comply with the CPD requirements will be subject to disciplinary proceedings. Members holding a practising certificate who have not complied with the requirements will not be eligible to renew that practising certificate.

### Evidence

The following items will be accepted as evidence in support of your CPD Record:

- Course outlines and teaching materials.
- Attendance record, registration forms, or confirmation of registration forms.
- Independent assessments that a learning activity has occurred.
- Confirmation by an instructor, mentor or tutor of participation.
- Confirmation by an employer of participation in an in-house programme.

14

15

## Exemption from the requirements

Members who are fully retired and undertake no accountancy work are exempt from the requirements. Members who are to all intent and purposes retired but undertake some accountancy work, for example as a favour to friends, will be exempt from the requirements if the income from the accountancy work undertaken does not exceed an annual income of £5,000. If you fall into either of these categories, please contact Membership Services to request a Declaration of Exemption. This should be signed and returned to AIA. Once you have returned the Declaration, you need do nothing further, unless your circumstances change and your annual income no longer falls below the £5,000 threshold.

AIA will take into account special circumstances affecting your ability to complete CPD, which include long term and/or serious illness, unemployment, maternity/paternity leave. In these circumstances, you should contact AIA for guidance.

### Affiliate members

If you have recently completed your examinations you will have up to date technical knowledge. Completing the work experience requirements also means that you will follow a substantial programme of development. You are encouraged to concentrate your efforts on achieving the required work experience and competences to attain AIA membership. On qualification as an Associate member you will be required to participate in the CPD programme.

### Academic members

There are no exemptions for Academic members because it is important that you also keep up to date with new developments and maintain your knowledge and skills. It is likely that you are already undertaking a large amount of relevant CPD, for example, through research activities and teaching. These activities will be acknowledged as valid and relevant CPD and will count towards the CPD requirement.

## Members in practice

16

All members holding practising certificates must:

- Maintain competence in the specialised areas of their practice; and
- Complete an appropriate proportion of development activity in those areas. It is your responsibility to ensure that the necessary development needs are undertaken to meet practising certificate requirements.

Further information for practising members is available in the document 'Members in Practice Guidelines' available to download from the AIA website.

## What AIA will do to help

17

### AIA Branches

The AIA has an extensive network of Branches throughout the UK and the world. For details of forthcoming events, please refer to International Accountant and the website. AIA is committed to increasing the coverage of the Branch network and members interested in getting involved should contact 0191 493 0281/[cpd@aiaworldwide.com](mailto:cpd@aiaworldwide.com).

### AIA Online CPD Modules

AIA has joined forces with a leading publisher of online professional development courses, to offer members a comprehensive suite of [AIA Online CPD modules](#). Competitively priced, these modules offer members an easy and convenient way to achieve CPD units. The Open University also offers AIA members a [10% discount](#) for their online professional development courses.

### Approved CPD providers

AIA has compiled a database of Approved CPD Providers to help you source suitable learning activities. The database is available to view on the AIA website. This should be your first stop to supplement CPD provided by AIA Branches. If there is a CPD provider not included in the list which you would like to recommend, please email [cpd@aiaworldwide.com](mailto:cpd@aiaworldwide.com).

### AIA website

The Members area of the AIA website contains a comprehensive section on CPD, providing links to your CPD Record. As well as online CPD courses, an events database, a list of AIA Approved CPD Providers, and other useful resources.

### CPD certificates

Your CPD Record can be provided annually in a certificate format, should you require this as proof for your employer or other professional association.

## Index

18

- Academic members, 15
- Affiliate members, 15
- Annual Declaration, 5, 13, 14, 17
- Competence Map, 11, 12
- CPD Certificate, 17
- CPD Record, 5, 13, 14, 17
- CPD units, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14
- Evidence, 14
- Exemption, 15
- IES 7, 1
- International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), 1
- Learning Activities, 8
- Lifelong Learning, 1, 3
- Measurement, 6
- Members in Practice, 16
- Monitoring and enforcement, 14
- Personal Development Plan, 9, 10
- Requirements, 5, 6, 14
- Rolling Three-Year Period, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14
- verifiable CPD units, 5, 6, 7

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