

Initial Professional Development (IPD)

Guide for Employers and Supervisors

Welcome

Completing AIA's Initial Professional Development (IPD) ensures that trainees have demonstrated the ability to apply theoretical knowledge, professional and practical skills in a work environment.

AIA's IPD Requirements have been established within the framework of guidelines issued by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and provide the foundation for the Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme of lifelong learning, essential for every professional accountant.

Your role as an employer or supervisor is incredibly important to this process as you will be supporting the growth and development of a future International Accountant.

In addition, acting as a supervisor assists in the development of your own personal skills and may count towards CPD requirements; AIA members can claim CPD units for active supervision.

Aspects of the AIA Initial Professional Development (IPD) Guide for Employers & Supervisors are based on the Handbook of International Education Pronouncements, 2019 Edition of the International Accounting Education Standards Board, published by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) in November 2019 and used with permission of IFAC.

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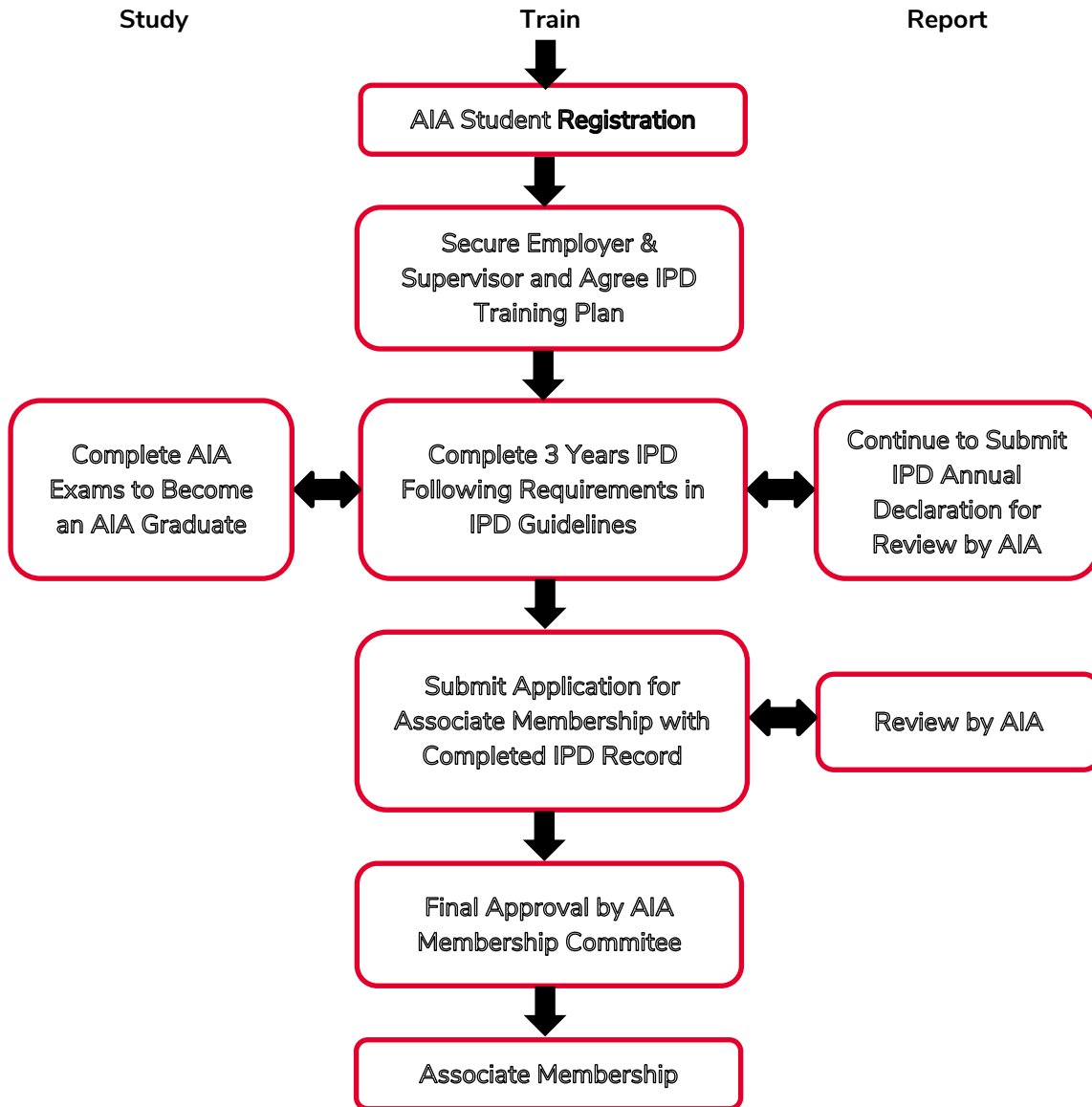
N.B. The IPD Requirements outlined in this guide do not cover the Recognised Professional Qualification (RPQ) for Statutory Audit, available in the UK/EU. Please refer to the AIA Guide to Becoming a Statutory Auditor

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1.0 How to Become an AIA Professional Accountant

The diagram illustrates the combination of theoretical study (exams) and training (Initial Professional Development) which are required to achieve qualified professional accountant status.



2.0 The Importance of IPD

Initial Professional Development (IPD) is defined as work experience gained by performing the work of a professional accountant under qualified supervision at progressive levels of responsibility.

The AIA professional accountancy qualification is designed to produce professional, competent accountants and IPD requirements play an essential part in this process.

To qualify as an International Accountant trainees must demonstrate academic ability and technical knowledge by passing the AIA exams, and demonstrate the application of professional knowledge, professional skills and professional ethics, values and attitudes in the workplace.

IPD provides a framework in which to develop professional skills and competence in the work environment by requiring trainees to:

- work at progressive levels of responsibility
- develop an awareness of the working environment, an understanding of relevant organisations and how business works
- apply technical knowledge and relate accounting work to other business functions and activities
- develop and apply professional conduct in practical, real-life situations
- enhance their Information Communication Technology (ICT) competency

3.0 Guidance for Employers

To be admitted as a fully qualified International Accountant an AIA student must complete the AIA Professional Exams coupled with three years' approved Initial Professional Development (IPD).

3.1 Employer Responsibilities

The trainee is primarily responsible for maintaining their IPD Record. Employers are required to make a commitment to facilitate and support IPD in the workplace, ensuring that an appropriate range of professional practical experience is provided to progress a trainee to an agreed level of professional competence.

Employers are required to appoint an appropriately qualified supervisor to supervise, assess, support and provide feedback to the trainee throughout the training period. Supervisors play a crucial part in the development of the trainee and are required to provide overall certification of the training carried out.

Employers are encouraged to make provision for trainees sitting AIA Exams and are advised that a minimum of three to five days study leave, with additional leave to attend the exams, is appropriate. Additional study leave is granted at the employer's discretion.

3.2 Employer Support

AIA provides guidance and information on IPD training on its website

www.aiaworldwide.com/ipd

In addition, a dedicated team is available to assist with any queries about IPD Requirements. For further advice, employers should contact:

T: +44 (0)191 493 0283

E: ipd@aiaworldwide.com

4.0 Guidance for Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for helping trainees develop and demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills, values, ethics, and attitudes required of professional accountants and for providing certification of IPD training.

4.1 Supervisor Appointment

Supervisors are appointed by employers and where possible should be the direct supervisor of the trainee.

Supervisors must be a professionally qualified accountant. AIA recommends that one supervisor should work with a maximum of six trainees at any one time to ensure appropriate levels of supervision, counselling, and evaluation.

4.2 Supervisor Responsibilities

An understanding of the AIA IPD Requirements as detailed earlier in this document is crucial for all supervisors alongside a current understanding of issues facing the profession and a sound knowledge of AIA's Code of Ethics.

It is essential that supervisors provide appropriate supervision, counselling, and evaluation during this process and allow trainees' access to varied professional development where appropriate.

4.3 Planning

If there is no pre-existing training programme supervisors are expected to map the trainee's career development throughout the training period and help the trainee to put together a practical plan to meet the AIA IPD requirements. AIA recommends the training plan and schedule includes input from the employer and that it is created and agreed at the start of the IPD process.

The IPD training schedule should include:

- an overview of the training schedule for the whole training period
- agreed dates for all future review meetings
- an agreed training plan for the immediate next six months

4.4 Review Meetings

Essential elements of each meeting:

- regular at six-monthly intervals
- formal review of trainee development and progress
- certification of any completed IPD profiles
- training programme for the next six months
- identification of goals and how these will be achieved
- consideration of employer needs and how these may impact on the proposed training plan

4.5 Assessment

During each review meeting the supervisor will evaluate the trainee's IPD together with any additional supporting evidence provided and sign and date any completed IPD Work Experience Profiles.

Trainees should be able to demonstrate a consistent progression of technical ability and skills acquisition and the ability to apply these skills in the workplace, at progressive levels of responsibility, relevant to their working environment.

During the meeting supervisors are advised to pay particular attention to the trainee's progress in the area of professional conduct. Competency in professional conduct, professional skills and technical competency are essential for all professional accountants and are acquired by the trainee as a consequence of their development and experience in the workplace. The specific competencies relating to these subjects are set out in greater detail later in this guide.

Supervisors must give trainees feedback on their progress, discussing their strengths and weaknesses in an open and constructive manner. At the close of each meeting the supervisor and trainee must agree the IPD training plan for the next six month period.

5.0 Benefits of Becoming a Supervisor

- facilitates the development of personal skills and which may count towards Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements; AIA members can claim two verifiable CPD units per six months of active supervising
- supervisors contribute to the development of competent staff at their place of work, as well as to the development of AIA as a professional body and to the profession as a whole
- AIA provides all the guidance and information required

6.0 IPD Requirements

6.1 Overview

Trainees' IPD should demonstrate technical competency together with the ability to apply professional skills, values and ethics in the workplace.

AIA requires a minimum of three years' IPD, which must be:

- Relevant
- carried out at progressive levels of responsibility
- fully documented
- reviewed and certified by a professionally qualified accountant (an AIA qualified accountant, a member of an IFAC member body, or a member of a statutorily recognised professional body)

6.2 When to Obtain IPD

The diverse nature of accountancy work allows trainees to gain experience in industry, commerce, public practice and the public sector. Trainees may obtain experience in more than one sector and as a variety of experience will benefit the trainees' career.

The organisation can be any size and the type of work may vary from one employer to another; however the employer should be able to offer trainees a varied training environment and access to guidance and support from a professionally qualified accountant.

6.3 When to Begin IPD

IPD may be gained before, during study for, or on successful completion of, the AIA exams, or a combination of these, however, AIA strongly recommends that IPD is completed alongside the exams. All routes must be concluded within ten years of registration as an AIA student.

6.4 What Can be Counted as IPD

AIA will accept periods of six months or more full-time employment as IPD. Part-time work experience will be assessed on its merits; trainees opting for

part time work should contact AIA for further guidance.

In order for experience to count as IPD it must be fully documented, reviewed and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

6.5 Prior Work Experience

AIA will only accept up to two years prior work experience (work undertaken before registration as an AIA student) towards IPD.

To be eligible for consideration as part of the three years IPD, prior work experience must have been gained in full time employment in the accountancy profession, under appropriate supervision and must be appropriately documented and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

6.6 Who Can Certify Prior Work Experience

Ideally all prior work experience should already be certified by the previous employer. If this is not possible the trainee's current employer or supervisor can certify prior work experience as long as they are satisfied with the evidence provided.

There is no time limit on what experience can be counted towards IPD, however trainees and their employers must consider carefully the appropriateness and relevance of experience gained more than five years previously.

Remember!

Examples of documents that could support experience include:

- training records from another professional body
- curriculum vitae supported by references
- appraisal records
- certificates of training courses attended
- in records from another professional body
- curriculum vitae supported by references
- appraisal records

7.0 Planning IPD

It is essential that all trainees meet with their employer at the beginning of IPD training. In order to develop the skills required to operate as a professional accountant in the workplace it is essential employers recommend an appropriately qualified supervisor to oversee and certify IPD and to ensure consistent and effective assessment of trainee performance in the workplace.

7.1 Developing a Training Schedule

As soon as the trainee receives the IPD commencement date from AIA they must meet with their supervisor to discuss and prepare a training schedule. The schedule should take into consideration the whole training period; establish training goals and an overall training timetable. The schedule should include agreed dates for six-monthly review meetings. The schedule should be used throughout the IPD period to plan activities and monitor trainee progress.

7.2 Developing a Training Plan

Following establishment of the schedule trainees and their supervisors must create and record a training plan.

The initial plan should cover the first six months of training leading up to the first review meeting, be appropriate for the employer's needs and prepared in line with AIA's requirements.

The three year IPD Training Plan should recognise the need for the trainee to demonstrate that they have:

- worked at progressive levels of responsibility
- achieved technical competency in financial accounting, financial management, auditing, management accounting, taxation and tax planning and Information Communication Technology (ICT)
- been able to apply professional skills, values and ethics

Please refer to the sections Progressive Levels of Responsibility, Technical Competency and Professional Conduct for further detailed guidance on how trainees can demonstrate competency in these areas.

Employers who already have a training programme in place may use this as the basis of the IPD plan and should liaise with AIA if they require any assistance with developing the IPD training plan.

Once the plan is agreed progress should be regularly reviewed and future goals identified as part of six-monthly formal review meetings.

AIA recommends that copies of all training plans should form a part of the trainee IPD portfolio of supporting evidence. AIA may request this evidence during its final IPD review.

7.3 Review Meetings

Six-monthly review meetings are an essential part of IPD training.

Trainees should bring training plans and any other additional evidence of training undertaken or courses that attended to the meetings and reflect upon progress with regards to technical competency and development in professional skills, values and ethics.

Suggested framework for IPD Review Meetings

At each review meeting the supervisor should:

- consider and discuss the training undertaken since the last meeting
- sign off any completed IPD Record
- deliver feedback
- agree the training goals for the next six month period

8.0 IPD Record and IPD Work Experience Profiles

AIA requires that trainees keep a continuous and detailed record of IPD over the three year period.

Trainees should use the AIA IPD Record to write a summary of the experience they have gained for each employment position. A template of the Record may be downloaded from the AIA website.

www.aiaworldwide.com/ipd

Each IPD Record must be signed off (certified) as a true and correct description of a trainee's progress and competencies by a professionally qualified accountant, usually the trainee's current supervisor or employer.

At the commencement of a new position either within the company or with a new employer, trainees must notify the AIA and note the details of the new position in the IPD Record.

Remember!

Before moving to a new employer trainees must complete an IPD Record and ensure their supervisor confirms any IPD obtained at their prior workplace.

IPD Records should also include full details and documented outcomes of any progress reviews and training courses in which the trainee has participated, together with any supporting evidence such as appraisal certificates or reports. AIA may ask to review this evidence when assessing IPD.

Remember!

All forms and supporting evidence should be completed in English.

8.1 IPD Annual Declaration

All trainees are required to complete and submit an IPD Annual Declaration, in October of each year.

The declaration contains details of the trainee's current employment and IPD and allows AIA to monitor their progress and where necessary provide further guidance and support.

8.2 Progressive Levels of Responsibility

Initially trainees will work under close supervision, progress to working independently and eventually may be responsible supervising the work of others.

Working Under Supervision

Early IPD training requires trainees to work within a supervised environment demonstrating the ability to carry out instructions, take control of specific tasks and perform within the operating structure of the organisation. Working under supervision trainees should:

- work effectively and according to instructions
- make good use of the information and communication technology available to collect and categorise relevant information
- display a degree of practical understanding and knowledge appropriate for the position held, raise queries and formulate questions to address any gaps in knowledge
- demonstrate an awareness of significant external factors such as the overall business environment, standards, rules and regulatory issues
- effectively manage themselves and all areas of responsibility assigned to them, adhere to established reporting lines and standards at all times
- utilise work experience to contribute to the improvement of departmental performance

Working Independently

Trainees should progress to working independently with a minimum of supervision, demonstrating initiative in the application of advanced knowledge and the ability to effectively manage workloads and

make informed professional decisions and recommendations. Working independently trainees should demonstrate that they can:

- work independently in unfamiliar situations
- display an advanced practical understanding and comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of any task and be able to develop and implement solutions to complex problems
- apply highly developed interpretive and evaluative skills to the collection of information and the preparation of internal and external reports; subsequent recommendations should incorporate advice on the effect any regulatory issues may have on proposed objectives and demonstrate the application of ethical sensitivity and judgement
- demonstrate an ability to effectively manage budgets, contribute to budget planning and produce forecasts and projections
- make professional decisions and recommendations informed by a critical analysis of the relevant issues and the application of professional scepticism and acknowledge the broader implications of these decisions
- effectively manage and support junior colleagues to meet performance objectives

9.0 Skills and Competencies

9.1 Technical Competency

IPD should illustrate the gaining of experience and technical competency in the main subject areas of financial accounting, financial management, auditing, management accounting, taxation and tax planning and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Specific competencies where trainees should demonstrate competence are itemised in the following table and trainees should provide evidence of their IPD in each category.

Financial Accounting

Preparation from incomplete records of a full set of financial statements for an entity, for example an unincorporated/incorporated entity

Full book-keeping service for an entity

Cash flow forecast for an entity

Financial Management

Financial control and decision making

Short term financial planning

Long term financial planning

Investment decisions

Auditing

Audit strategy and evaluation of risk

Audit process; systems compliance

Reporting and communication

Management Accounting

Business planning

Operation and development of management accounting systems

Decision management; management performance

Taxation and Tax Planning

Taxation liability; taxation planning and mitigation

Presentation

Current legislation

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Installing a fully integrated off-the-shelf accounting system onto a client's computer and providing initial guidance on its operation and use

Installing a new in-house self-assessment tax return system and training colleagues on the use of the system

Advising clients on control aspects of computerised wages systems

Use of spread sheet techniques when carrying out day-to-day tasks

9.2 Professional Conduct

It is essential that professional accountants adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct when carrying out their day-to-day duties and when developing professional relationships.

Accountants should act with professional competence and due care to ensure that the services they provide are in accordance with accepted best practice and the manner in which they deal with clients and other professional service providers is beyond reproach.

International Accountants and trainees should also act in line with the AIA Code of Ethics:

www.aiaworldwide.com/ethics

Throughout their IPD training, trainees should demonstrate how they have developed their proficiencies in these aspects whilst adhering to high standards of professional conduct at all times.

The specific aspects of professional conduct where competence should be demonstrated are itemised in the following section.

Upholding of Professional Ethics, Values and Standards

Ongoing, strict compliance with all applicable codes of professional conduct and professional standards

Maintaining and demonstrating professional objectivity; providing advice and guidance

Commitment to Personal Professional Development and Professional Knowledge

Completion of CPD activities, with evidence of self-reflection and self-appraisal of professional development

Attendance at regular appraisal meetings and evidence of follow up action taken in accordance with advice and guidance received

Displaying Professional Competence and Due Care in Carrying Out Tasks

Apply intellectual skills in making professional judgement decisions when carrying out work and completing complex work tasks to agreed deadline dates and to exemplary standards

Displaying and Maintaining Effective, Ethical Professional Relationships, Both Written and External to the Firm

Providing support to peer colleagues and junior staff

Working effectively as a senior person and developing good business relationships with customers and other professional contacts

Ongoing Awareness of Professional Developments

Reading professional accountancy journals, relevant literature and articles Attending in-house or external technical update sessions

Preparing technical updates or presentations for colleagues or other professional accountants

Publication of an appropriate technical article in a recognised accountancy, auditing or taxation journal

9.3 Professional Skills

IPD is more than simply gaining experience in technical competencies and professional conduct and should illustrate the professional skills trainees can demonstrate following their training.

Whilst trainees require technical skills to undertake accounting roles, the expanded business role of many of today's accountants means that trainees will require a range of professional skills in addition.

Specific professional skills where trainees should demonstrate competence are itemised in the following table.

Intellectual Skills

Evaluate information from a variety of sources and perspectives through research, analysis and integration

Apply professional judgement, including identification and evaluation of alternatives, to reach well-reasoned conclusions based on all relevant facts and circumstances

Identify when it is appropriate to consult with specialists to solve problems and reach conclusions

Apply reasoning, critical analysis and innovative thinking to solve problems

Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Display cooperation and teamwork when working towards organisational goals

Communicate clearly and concisely when presenting, discussing and reporting in formal and informal situations, both in writing and orally

Demonstrate awareness of cultural and language differences in all communication

Apply active listening and effective interviewing techniques

Apply negotiation skills to reach solutions and agreements

Apply consultative skills to minimise or resolve conflict, solve problems, and maximise opportunities

Present ideas and influence others to provide support and commitment

Personal Skills

Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning

Apply professional scepticism through questioning and critically assessing all information

Set high personal standards of delivery and monitor personal performance, through feedback from others and through reflection

Manage time and resources to achieve professional commitments Anticipate challenges and plan potential solutions

Apply an open mind to new opportunities

Organisational Skills

Undertaken assignments in accordance with established practices to meet prescribed deadlines

Review own work and that of others to determine whether it complies with the organisation's quality standards

Apply people management skills to motivate and develop others

Apply delegation skills to deliver assignments

Apply leadership skills to influence others to work towards organisational goals

Apply appropriate tools and technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness and improve decision making

10.0 Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs include questions trainees may commonly ask.

I have just registered as an AIA student but am not working at the moment, what should I do?

AIA strongly recommends that IPD is completed alongside the exams or shortly after their completion. If trainees are not in employment when they apply for student registration they need do nothing further; however, it is very important that they inform AIA as soon as they secure full-time employment within the accountancy profession.

Can I use work experience gained before I registered as an AIA student?

AIA will accept up to two years prior work experience (work undertaken before registration as an AIA student) towards trainees' IPD. To be eligible for consideration as part of their three years IPD, prior work experience must have been gained in full time employment in the accountancy profession under appropriate supervision and must be appropriately documented and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

How many hours do I need to work for my employment to be counted as full-time?

Full-time work is defined as more than 35 hours per week.

Will AIA count any part-time work as IPD?

Appropriate and supervised part-time work may be considered on a pro- rata basis. Trainees should contact AIA for further guidance if they are in a part-time position.

Will AIA consider contract work as part of my IPD?

Contract work may be acceptable if it is agreed by the trainee's supervisor to be equivalent to that of other employees and is relevant within the AIA IPD Requirements.

Do I have to gain my IPD in a particular sector or employment position?

IPD may be acquired in any business sector (e.g. industry, commerce or public practice) or in more than one sector.

I work in a specialist area; can I use this experience towards gaining my three years IPD?

IPD may be acquired in a specialist area (e.g. corporate finance, internal audit) provided it is relevant and appropriately supervised.

Will AIA accept lecturing as part of my IPD?

AIA will accept lecturing provided it is at the equivalent level of the AIA Foundation level exams and above (i.e. comparable to the year of a UK degree). A maximum of 12 months lecturing experience will count towards the qualifying period.

I am self-employed; will my work count towards my IPD?

AIA will only recognise appropriately supervised accounting experience as contributing to trainees' IPD, however, some supervised sub-contract work may be acceptable. Trainees should contact AIA directly for further advice.

I have just left my current job after four months; can I still count this as part of my IPD?

In order to ensure that trainees receive the best possible start to their career, AIA will only accept IPD periods of six months or more as qualifying towards IPD. AIA believes that sufficient knowledge of a company and experience in working practices cannot be acquired if the time spent in one position is less than six months. Shorter periods will be eligible for considering if promotion is received within the same company leading to a position in a different section, or if a move is made to a different employment address of the same firm. Trainees should contact AIA directly for advice specific to their situation.

How much detail do I need to record?

Trainees should record clearly and concisely, providing adequate detail to demonstrate ability and progressive levels of responsibility in technical competency and professional skills, values and ethics.

Can I complete my IPD record retrospectively?

It is possible for trainees to complete their record retrospectively; however, AIA advises that the record is completed on an ongoing basis to allow regular review by trainees and their supervisors to ensure that their work experience is progressing in line with their IPD training plan and schedule.

Who can be a supervisor?

Supervisors should be professionally qualified accountants. Where possible they should be the trainee's direct supervisor within the organisation.

Can my employer also be my supervisor?

Yes, employers can also be supervisors provided that they meet the requirements of being a professionally qualified accountant and that they are able to allocate appropriate time to meet the requirements of both supervisor and employer.

What if my employer is not appropriate or my supervisor is not appropriately qualified?

AIA will contact the trainee and offer guidance as to how best to proceed.

I am the most senior member of accounting staff, who can I ask to sign my IPD Record?

A trainee's IPD Record in this position should be signed by the auditors or accountants of their organisation.

11.0 Glossary

Term	Definition
Supervisor	An employee of the organisation providing IPD training. This person will be a professionally qualified accountant (an International Accountant, a member of an IFAC member body or a member of a statutorily recognised professional body) and ideally able to directly supervise the trainee.
IPD Annual Declaration	A form that must be completed and submitted to AIA in October of each year. All AIA students and graduates are required to submit IPD Annual Declarations.
IPD Requirements	Criteria that must be satisfied in order for the trainee's Initial Professional Development to be verified and approved.
Professionally Qualified Accountant	An International Accountant (AAIA; FAIA); a member of an IFAC member body or a member of a statutorily recognised professional body.
IPD Record	A signed record of the trainee's IPD which is submitted to AIA on completion of the training period. A separate Record should be used for each employer and employment position. The Record should be completed in English.
IPD Training Schedule	Documented training process created at the beginning of the IPD period and used as a framework by trainees and supervisors to plan trainees' work and ensure adequate coverage of all aspects of training. AIA may ask to review this document at any time during the IPD training period.
IPD Training Plan	A plan covering a six month period of training leading up to the review meeting. The plan should be realistic and must be prepared in line with the IPD requirements together with the needs of the employer. AIA may ask to review this document at any time during the IPD training period.
Portfolio of Supporting Evidence	A collection of supporting evidence relating to training undertaken. All IPD documents (training schedule, training plan, IPD Record and IPD Work Experience Profiles) together with details or certificates relating to any additional training or courses should be included in the portfolio. AIA may ask to review the portfolio when reviewing IPD.
IPD Evidence	A personal record (usual in diary format) of IPD achievement kept by each trainee. The evidence should be updated regularly (i.e. daily or weekly) and brought to review meetings as supporting evidence of experience attained. The evidence must be completed in English. AIA may ask to review the portfolio when reviewing IPD.

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