



## **Skills Framework**

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# Skills Framework

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### **Extract from *The Common Content Qualification Requirements document***

#### **Entry-level Professional Accountants**

An entry-level professional accountant must be capable of performing those aspects of the services of professional accountants that are specified in the *common learning outcomes* and *national learning outcomes*.

The achievement of the common and national learning outcomes must require the acquisition of *interdisciplinary and other competencies and attributes*. [see *Skills Framework*]

# Skills Framework

## Interdisciplinary and Other Competencies and Attributes

The Skills Framework covers the interdisciplinary and other competencies and attributes. It should be read in conjunction with the *Qualifications Requirements document* and the *Introduction to the Learning Outcomes and Knowledge*, and considered in the context of the five service areas – assurance and related services, performance measurement and reporting, strategic and business management, financial management and taxation and legal services.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Skills Framework is to specify for an entry level professional accountant:

- the cognitive skills required to apply the learning outcomes in the five service areas.
- the behavioural skills required to apply the learning outcomes in the five service areas.
- the integrative and multidisciplinary skills required to bring together the learning outcomes and knowledge in the five service areas.
- the professional values, ethics and attitudes required of such an individual.
- appropriate methods of assessment to provide evidence of achievement of the skill level set for each statement.

The integration of material from separate service areas together with integrated personal and professional competencies will add significantly to the objective of the Common Content Project to set a high standard. Numerical and information technology user competencies are described in the appropriate service areas where there is a requirement for underpinning knowledge and understanding. They are not considered as a separate part of this Skills Framework.

## Context

The skill statements set out are expected to be applied at a level commensurate with an entry level professional accountant's abilities. The statements are largely generic to many functions however their application in this context is restricted to accountancy. It would not be appropriate for example that a communication skill was assessed in isolation, outside an accountancy environment.

The skill statements have been split into three classes.

Firstly cognitive and behavioural skills are a range of individual statements within categories set at a level of achievement appropriate to the entry level professional accountant. The sub categories of cognitive skills are (a) analytic and (b) appreciative. The sub categories of behavioural skills are (a) personal, (b) interpersonal and (c) organisational.

Secondly integrative and multidisciplinary skills are applied to integrate all the material in the service areas together with individual skills and appropriate ethical considerations. Integrative skills bring all aspects of a qualification to bear. Multidiscipline skills are more restricted perhaps bringing together two – three service areas with skills and other attributes.

Thirdly professional values, ethics and attitudes provide the entry level professional accountant with a framework to exercise professional judgement and to act in an ethical manner in the best interest of society and the profession. (IAESB IES 4).

## Capability Statements

The approach taken throughout this document is to apply the principle of capability. This is defined in the framework for international education statements (IAESB Framework) as “the professional knowledge, professional skills; and professional values, ethics, and attitudes required to demonstrate competence.” This is further explained as capabilities or attributes held by individuals that enable them to perform their roles. Capabilities stop short of actual demonstration of performance necessarily required in a workplace environment. The Capability Statements are set at the Standard required of the entry level professional accountant providing an indication that an individual has the ability to perform competently in the workplace. The capability statements represent the learning outcomes to be achieved through the professional qualification program.

**All entry level professional accountants will be expected to have met the seven skills areas in the Framework. Each skills area contains the related principal capability statements. It is expected that all entry level professional accountants will meet each of the statements in each skill area.**

The requirements in the skills framework can be achieved through theoretical education as defined in the learning outcomes document and academic education, etc., or by means of practical experience. Practical experience includes matters such as coaching and learning “on-the-job”. This is consistent with the guidance provided in the Explanatory Materials of the Revised IES3 *Professional Skills* and IES4 *Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes* which suggest that an appropriate approach to incorporating the requirements would be a mixture of learning and development activities which combine structure learning programs and practical experience but do not mandate this.

Consequently, when determining compliance with requirements in the skills framework as part of a self assessment or review process, both the satisfaction of the common content qualification requirements outside of the skills framework and the satisfaction of the practical experience requirements can be drawn upon to provide evidence of compliance with the skills framework.

## Assessment of Capability Statements

Assessment of Capability Statements can be carried out using a number of equivalent and complementary techniques. It can range from evidence of success in a university examination through to the assessment of a mentor in a complex professional engagement. Within this range are the many different types of examinations; oral, written, and technology based. Mentor assessments and other peer reviews can range from assessment of achievement of an individual competence through to a broad assessment of multidiscipline or integrative skills.

IES 6 *Assessment of Professional Competence* does not mandate that the assessment of competence is carried out in only one way. However, IES 6 does require that assessment activities be designed such that they have high levels of reliability, validity, equity, transparency, and sufficiency, and that the assessment of professional competence be based on verifiable evidence.

# The meaning of multidisciplinary integration of education and assessment

There are two primary reasons for multidisciplinary integration of education and assessment.

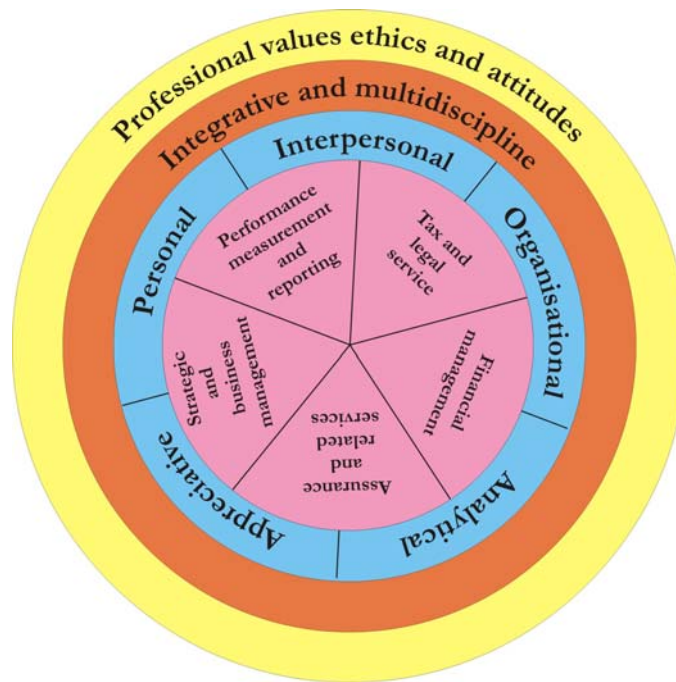
- In order to perform well in a service area, professional accountants need an understanding of the other service areas. The program of assessment needs to reflect this.
- In order to deal with situations encountered in practice, professional accountants need to integrate knowledge from across the range of all subject areas. The program of assessment also needs to reflect this

The first bullet point relates to the need to integrate knowledge from other disciplines to enable the satisfactory achievement of the learning outcomes in a particular discipline. This means that this aspect of integration can be achieved by means of an assessment in a particular service area (e.g., auditing) that requires knowledge from other service areas (e.g., accounting, governance from SBM, financial management, tax, etc.).

The second bullet point relates to the need to integrate knowledge and skills across all of the service areas, other knowledge and ethical and professional requirements. This would be achieved in a complex scenario with incomplete information in which the candidate needs to identify, prioritize, analyse and evaluate issues and develop options, conclude, recommend and communicate these results at an appropriate level of technical language to interested parties. Therefore the assessment is not directed towards the satisfactory achievement of the learning outcomes in a particular service area, but towards demonstrating professional judgment in taking into account the interaction between the service areas and the nature and extent of the information available. The high level nature of such multidisciplinary integration implies that candidates would not be re-assessed in great depth on the technical details required for an assessment of a particular service area. The nature of this type of multidisciplinary assessment implies that it take place subsequent to any assessments of the individual service areas at first or second degree level, other knowledge and ethical requirements, and after the completion of at least part of the practical experience requirement. Consequently, such multidisciplinary assessment is considered to be defined as being at second degree level.

## Framework

The Framework can be demonstrated in the following diagram. The service areas form the core around which cognitive and behavioural skills are applied. All individual learning outcomes in the service areas and individual skills are capable of being incorporated into an integrated problem. All aspects of the work of the entry level professional accountant are subject to the application of appropriate professional values, ethics and attitudes.



## 1. Cognitive – Analytical Skills

The entry level professional accountant is capable of:

- 1.1 Selecting, managing and evaluating information from multiple sources and perspectives
- 1.2 Applying professional judgement to evaluate alternatives, and conclude in a well-reasoned manner supported by evidence.
- 1.3 Applying inquiry, reasoning, critical analysis and innovative thinking to consider alternatives, analyse outcomes, and recommend solutions to unstructured or complex problems
- 1.4 Identifying when to seek assistance from experts or consult with specialists to solve problems and reach conclusions

## 2. Cognitive – Appreciative Skills

The entry level professional accountant is capable of:

- 2.1 Prioritising tasks and managing time and resource constraints to achieve professional commitments
- 2.2 Applying professional scepticism and a critical approach to relevant situations
- 2.3 Applying a creative and integrated approach to problem solving.
- 2.4 Applying the concept of materiality to relevant professional actions.

## 3. Behavioural – Personal Skills

The entry level professional accountant is capable of:

- 3.1 Demonstrating an even handed and tolerant approach with an awareness of cultural and language differences
- 3.2 Demonstrating an open minded and adaptable approach to business problems and new opportunities
- 3.3 Demonstrating a commitment to and applying the concept of lifelong learning

- 3.4 Anticipating challenges and planning potential solutions which are appropriate to the situation
- 3.5 Setting high personal standards of delivery and monitor personal performance, through feedback from others and through reflective activity.
- 3.6 Demonstrating an enquiring and questioning mind
- 3.7 Managing pressure and anticipating the impact of pressure on others.

#### **4. Behavioural – Interpersonal Skills**

The entry level professional accountant is capable of:

- 4.1 Applying active listening and interviewing techniques
- 4.2 Communicating in a clear and concise manner appropriate to the audience and situation both in writing and orally
- 4.3 Apply effective communication of problem analysis and recommendations to persuade recipients and obtain their commitment
- 4.4 Undertaking a negotiation to an acceptable agreement in a clear and fair manner
- 4.5 Applying consultative skills to minimise or resolve conflict, solve problems, and maximise opportunities
- 4.6 Applying people management skills to motivate and develop others
- 4.7 Applying leadership skills to influence others to work towards organisational goals
- 4.8 Applying delegation skills to deliver assignments within identified deadlines and to applicable standards
- 4.9 Understanding the importance of team structures and display cooperation and teamwork when working towards organisational goals.

#### **5. Behavioural – Organisational Skills**

The entry level professional accountant is capable within their training organisation of:

- 5.1 Planning, managing, and controlling projects to their employer's guidelines and standards to meet identified deadlines
- 5.2 Reviewing own work and that of others to determine whether it complies with the applicable quality standard
- 5.3 Applying appropriate tools and technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness and improve decision-making.
- 5.4 Understand the needs of stakeholders (internal and external)

#### **6. Integrative and Multidisciplinary Skills**

The entry level professional accountant is capable of:

- 6.1 applying knowledge from different service areas; specifically to the extent of:
  - 6.1.1 critically analysing and evaluating problems in a multidiscipline environment
  - 6.1.2 identifying a range of solutions from problem analysis
  - 6.1.3 developing and presenting recommendations appropriate to a specialist and non-specialist audience which combine technical skills
- 6.2 designing, planning and implementing a project requiring multidiscipline skills.

#### **7. Professional values, ethics and attitudes**

A. *The entry level professional accountant is capable in the area of business ethics of:*

- 7.1 Explaining the nature of ethics and its significance in the business environment, and in particular in relation to business and good governance.

- 7.2 Explaining the advantages and disadvantages of rules-based and principles-based approaches to ethics
- 7.3 Analysing the interrelationship of ethics and law, including the relationship between laws, regulations, and the public interest.
- 7.4 Analysing the consequences of unethical behaviour to the individual, the profession and society.
  
- B. The entry level professional accountant is capable in the area of professional ethics of:*
  
- 7.5 Explaining the role of ethics within the profession and in relation to the concept of social responsibility
- 7.6 Approaching decision making using an ethical framework (IESBA Code and National Ethical Requirements) by:
  - 7.6.1 Identifying ethical issues and determining when ethical issues apply,
  - 7.6.2 Analysing alternative courses of action and determining the ethical consequences of these,
  - 7.6.3 Applying the fundamental ethical principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour, as well as the requirement for independence when relevant, to ethical dilemmas and determine an appropriate approach to respond to threats to these
  - 7.6.4 Applying the relevant ethical requirements to professional behaviour in compliance with standards.
- 7.7 Demonstrating personal integrity.



# Comparability of Approach with Key External Benchmarks

## IAESB Education Standards

International Education Standards (IES) 1 – 6 (Revised) have been reviewed and compared against the Skills Framework. The Skills Framework, together with the Common Content service areas, cover IES 2, IES 5 and IES 6. A comparison with IES 3 *Professional Skills* and IES 4 *Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes* is set out in Appendix 1. This shows that the Skills Framework meets the requirements of these two standards. The Skills Framework requirements go to a greater level of detail in some areas and sufficiently meet all areas.

## EU Statutory Auditor Directive

The Skills Framework has been compared with the current and revised EU Statutory Auditor Directive on the qualifications of auditors. There are no items within this Directive which are not covered sufficiently in the Skills Framework.

## European Qualifications Framework

The Skills Framework has been compared with the eight levels and categories of the European Qualification Framework learning outcome definitions. There are three categories of learning outcomes:

### Level attained by Skills Framework

- |              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| • Knowledge  | 5/6 |
| • Skills     | 5/6 |
| • Competence | 6   |

The European Qualification Framework defines Level 6 qualifications as “providing access to professional employment opportunities and are often career entry qualifications for professional and managerial work”. Broadly the levels of attainment being demonstrated by the framework in the Common Content Project seem closest to Level 6 within the EQF system.

## Comparison of Skills Framework to IES (Revised)

### IES3 INITIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (REVISED)

<b>Table A</b>	<b>Fully Achieved by Skills</b>
7a (i)	1.1
7a(ii)	1.2
7a (iii)	1.4
7a (iv)	1.3
7a (v)	1.3
7b (i)	4.9
7b (ii)	4.2
7b (iii)	3.1
7b (iv)	4.1
7b (v)	4.4
7b (vi)	4.5
7b (vii)	4.3
7c (i)	3.3
7c (ii)	2.2
7c (iii)	3.5
7c (iv)	2.1
7c (v)	3.4
7c (vi)	3.2
7d (i)	5.1
7d (ii)	5.2
7d (iii)	4.6
7d (iv)	4.8
7d (v)	4.7
7d (vi)	5.3

### IES4 INITIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - PROFESSIONAL VALUES, ETHICS AND ATTITUDES (REVISED)

<b>Table A</b>	<b>Fully Achieved by Skills</b>
11a (i)	2.2
11a (ii)	1.2
11b (i)	7.1
11b (ii)	7.2
11b (iii)	7.6
11b (iv)	7.6
11b (v)	7.6
11b (vi)	7.6
11c (i)	7.5
11c (ii)	7.1
11c (iii)	7.3
11c (iv)	7.4