

Candidate Practical Experience Guidelines

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Welcome

Practical Experience to achieve real career benefits

Practical Experience is where essential on-the-job knowledge and skills are developed so that candidates can learn, adapt quickly and achieve consistent, quality results at work. Mentored practical experience is one of the reasons why the Chartered Accountants Program is a leading postgraduate accounting program and why the Chartered Accountant designation is esteemed world-wide.

Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand have designed an approach to practical experience to assist employers in developing their accounting staff.

Practical experience is gained in the workplace when you, as a candidate, encounter real-life situations and use your knowledge and skills to solve problems, make decisions, work in teams, build relationships and communicate with others. In doing this you also test and apply your values, ethics and attitudes.

There are three key roles in the Practical Experience component: that of mentor, line manager and candidate. As a candidate, you will develop and track the attainment of key workplace competencies throughout your three years of qualifying service. The Candidate Practical Experience Guidelines and logbook will help you set development goals, and plan a structured approach to achieve the workplace competencies you need to become a fully productive employee and qualified Chartered Accountant.

Your mentor and line manager are critical to the successful completion of your practical experience. They will give you guidance, support and insights into the profession. They will assist you to find your feet, identify opportunities and ultimately assess your competence as an accounting professional.

Research has shown that while training alone improves productivity, when coupled with the support of a mentor or coach, it can achieve three times as much as training alone. Practical Experience is the period of on-the-job experience and development which, together with academic study and the Chartered Accountants Program, constitutes the journey to CA membership.

I hope that the benefits of this structured approach to practical experience will deliver results to you that make the investment in time worthwhile and ultimately strengthen the profession.



Simon Hann

General Executive Education & Learning

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1. Practical Experience in the Chartered Accountants Program

Practical experience can provide a map for you, as a candidate, as you navigate your way through the Program. You must be able to determine where you are, where you want to go, and be able to ask for help if you lose your way. While your mentor plays a role in providing direction and support, it is important to recognise that you are the driver on the journey.

Practical experience is crucial in developing not only your skills and knowledge, but also a great opportunity to expand your network, and build accountability and ownership in your development. Mentoring is a partnership based on trust, respect and honesty and, as with any relationship, its success depends on the time and commitment invested in it.

1.1 An international approach

The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) prescribes the practical experience that candidates of member bodies need to complete before they qualify as accountants. As members of IFAC, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (Chartered Accountants ANZ) have adopted the IFAC framework in the Practical Experience component of the Chartered Accountant Program. It is reflected in these guidelines and in the Candidate Practical Experience Logbook.

According to IFAC, practical experience provides a professional environment in which aspiring professional accountants develop competence by:

- Becoming aware of the environment in which services are provided;
- Enhancing their understanding of organisations, how business works and professional relationships;
- Being able to relate accounting work to other business functions and activities; Developing the appropriate professional values, ethics and attitudes in practical real-life situations; and
- Having an opportunity to develop at progressive levels of responsibility while under appropriate levels of supervision.

Sufficient practical experience has a blend of depth and breadth, knowledge and application and, where appropriate, integration of material from different areas applied to a range of situations and contexts. The breadth of practical experience is affected by factors such as: nature of role; level of proficiency; national or local laws; requirements of regulatory authorities; and the public's expectation for professional competence. The depth of practical experience is affected by factors such as the variety and complexity of tasks as well as the level of supervisory and monitoring support.

Combining formal accounting education with practical experience produces competent Chartered Accountants with appropriate values, ethics and attitudes, who are capable of making a positive contribution to the profession and society.

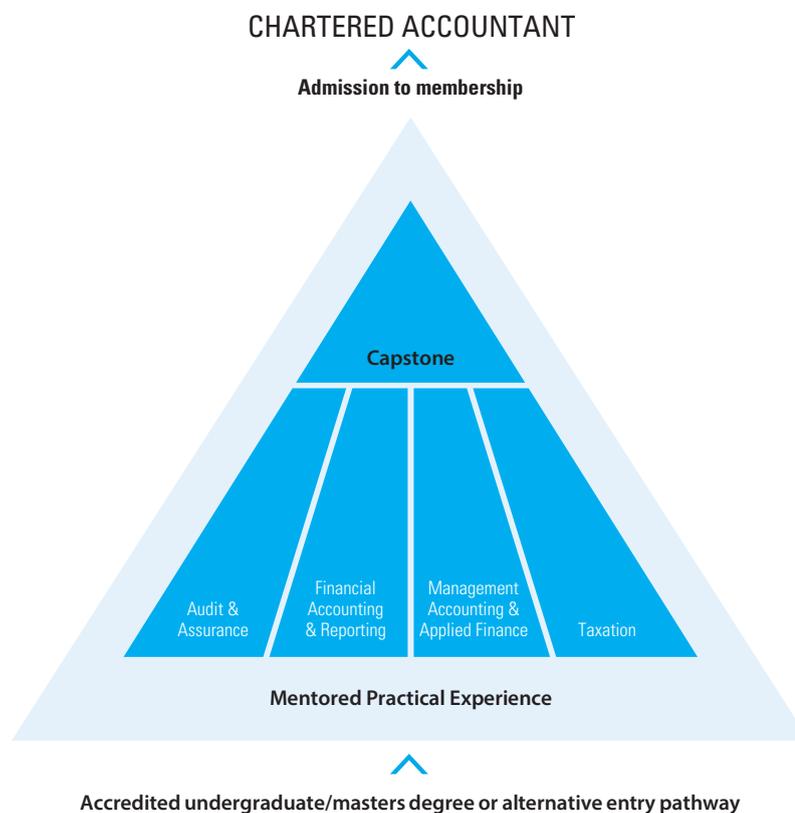
1.2 The Chartered Accountant Pathway

The Chartered Accountants Program combines two components:

- 1 Five modules of study
- 2 Practical Experience, under the guidance of a mentor.

This combination creates an environment that encourages Chartered Accountants to develop superior technical skills, appropriate values, ethics and attitudes, outstanding professional competence and an exciting future in which they are capable of making a positive contribution to the profession and society.

Our holistic approach to development of competencies fulfils employer and public expectations that Chartered Accountants can be relied on to provide accurate, complete and independent information and advice.



1.3 The elements of Practical Experience

Practical Experience in the Chartered Accountants Program consists of three elements:



2. Competencies

2.1 What is competency?

IFAC defines competency as:

‘the ability to perform a work role or task to a demonstrated defined standard. To meet a competency standard, the activity is performed under specified conditions to the specified standard of performance’.

The areas of workplace competency expected of a Chartered Accountant at the point of admission to membership are outlined below and categorised according to technical and non-technical areas and their level of complexity.

You are expected to develop competency in at least two of the below listed technical areas and all of the non-technical areas over their three years of qualifying practical experience.

Competencies are recorded by candidates and signed off by mentors via the logbook as you progress through your three years of practical experience.

2.2 Technical and non-technical competencies

Technical competencies are prescribed in nine areas of accounting work:

- Accounting academic
- Accounting information systems
- Auditing
- External reporting
- Financial management
- Insolvency and reconstructions
- Management accounting
- Taxation
- Financial advice.

Non-technical competencies are generic competencies required by all accounting professionals. They include:

- Teamwork
- Organisational skills
- Research and evaluation
- Decision making
- Exercising ethical and professional behaviour
- Communication and interpersonal skills.

2.3 Levels of competency

Level 1 - Foundation

- Working under supervision and carrying out tasks of a low level of risk and complexity using established processes
 - Makes judgements of quality using given criteria.
-

Level 2 - Intermediate

- Working as part of a team and carrying out some tasks independently, being responsible for the quality of own work
 - Exercises judgement within established parameters.
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Level 3 -

- Managing your own work and being responsible for the quality and quantity of the work you do
 - Exercises professional judgement
 - May be responsible for leading a team and managing certain functions.
-

When you lodge a Practical Experience Agreement with Chartered Accountants ANZ, and your application for provisional membership is approved, you will receive access to the Candidate Practical Experience Logbook. The logbook will provide more detailed information on each of the required competency areas. Its purpose is to enable you to track your progress in developing the required competencies.

3. Key parties

3.1 Roles and responsibilities

There are three parties involved in the Practical Experience component – candidates, mentors and Approved Training Employers (ATE). The responsibilities of each party are set out below:

THE CANDIDATE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:	THE MENTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:	THE ATE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:
Finding a mentor and managing the relationship	Registering as the candidate's mentor by signing the Practical Experience Agreement	Applying for ATE status before the commencement of the period of practical experience
Keeping a record of the experience they have gained	Acting as a guide, coach and role model for the candidate	Providing a range and depth of practical experience
Developing a training plan in conjunction with their mentor, taking responsibility for documenting the plan	Developing a training plan in conjunction with the candidate	
Ensuring records of experience are signed off quarterly	Meeting regularly with the candidate to review experience gained and set objectives for the next period	Providing an appropriate environment to support the candidate through the Chartered Accountants Program
Completing the required period of practical experience	Helping transfer information to a new mentor, if required	Running a formal performance appraisal process to monitor and review the candidate's progress
Advising Chartered Accountants ANZ of any change in their situation (for example, change of mentor or employer)	Completing a Mentor's Interim Report if the candidate changes mentor and/or employer	
Enrolling into Program modules	Supporting the candidate to prepare for the Program modules	Allowing time for candidates to participate in the Program learning and assessment activities
Successfully completing the Program modules and the required practical experience (note these do not need to occur concurrently) within the maximum 8-year provisional membership period	Supporting the candidate through the Program and, on the completion of their practical experience, completing the Mentor's Final Report to accompany the candidate's application for membership	Motivating and supporting candidates as they prepare for the Program

3.2 Practical Experience Agreement

The roles and responsibilities of the key parties are formalised in the Practical Experience Agreement. You have the responsibility to ensure that each party signs the Practical Experience Agreement. You must then submit it to Chartered Accountants ANZ to signify the start date of your Practical Experience component.

4. Your mentor and your line manager

4.1 The role of your mentor

Your mentor will supervise and monitor your progression throughout the Practical Experience component of the Chartered Accountants Program.

Your mentor's role is to:

- Share their knowledge and experience
- Help you to identify and plan to meet the gaps in your knowledge
- Meet with you face-to-face at least quarterly to plan and focus on demonstrating how your daily work meets the areas of competency.

When you are eligible for membership, your mentor assesses your technical and non-technical competence to the levels required, and submits a written report on your achievement of competence at the end of the Practical Experience component.

Your mentor works with you to:

- Design and plan your Practical Experience component
- Recommend suitable activities where you can demonstrate competence in the workplace
- Provide guidance on how you can progressively develop competence
- Identify the competencies that are already assessed as part of your employer's performance management system
- Document all meetings they have with you
- Review your logbook regularly and sign off on your competency development
- Assess your overall level of competence at the end of the Practical Experience component and complete a final mentor report
- Ensure that your Practical Experience is efficient and cost effective for your employer.

4.2 The role of your line manager

Your line manager's role is to regularly review your workplace experience and the extent to which you demonstrate competence.

Your line manager will ensure you have day-to-day exposure to the required activities/tasks needed to develop required competence. They will assist in monitoring of performance against these competencies and provide feedback on achievements and development areas. It is likely that you will have a number of line managers during your years of practical experience.

Your line manager will work with you to:

- Design and plan your Practical Experience component
- Find suitable activities/projects where you can demonstrate competence in the workplace
- Check that your practical experience is meeting the required level of competence as set out in your logbook
- Identify the competencies that can be covered by assessment within your organisation's existing performance management framework
- Document all meetings with you and keep records throughout the Practical Experience component
- Ensure the Practical Experience component is undertaken in an efficient and cost effective mode for your organisation.