

**Final Pronouncement
March 2025**

International Education Standards™

International Education Standard 3, Initial Professional Development – Professional Skills (Revised)

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.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARD 3, INITIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (2026)

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Introduction	
Scope of this Standard	1–4
Effective Date.....	5
Objective	6
Requirements	
Learning Outcomes for Professional Skills	7
Review of Professional Accounting Education Programs	8
Formal Assessment of Professional Skills	9
Explanatory Material	
Scope of this Standard	A1–A7
Objective.....	A8
Learning Outcomes for Professional Accountants	A9–A16
Review of Professional Accounting Education Programs	A17–A18
Formal Assessment of Professional Skills	A19–A20
Appendix 1: Description of Levels of Proficiency	

Introduction

Scope of this Standard (Ref: Para. A1–A7)

1. International Education Standard (IES) 3 prescribes the learning outcomes for professional skills that aspiring professional accountants are required to achieve by the end of Initial Professional Development (IPD). Professional skills are the (a) intellectual, (b) interpersonal and communication, (c) personal, and (d) organizational skills that a professional accountant integrates with technical competence and professional values, ethics, and attitudes to demonstrate professional competence.
2. IES 3 is addressed to International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) member organizations. IFAC member organizations have responsibility for ensuring that IPD meets the requirements of IES 3. In addition, IES 3 may be helpful to educational organizations, employers, regulators, government authorities, and any other stakeholders who support the learning and development of aspiring professional accountants.
3. IES 3 specifies the competence areas and learning outcomes that describe the professional skills required of aspiring professional accountants by the end of IPD. IES 2, *Initial Professional Development – Technical Competence* (2026), and IES 4, *Initial Professional Development – Professional Values, Ethics, and Attitudes* (2026), specify competence areas and learning outcomes relevant to their areas of focus within IPD. Together, these IESs specify the competence areas and learning outcomes that describe the professional competence required of aspiring professional accountants by the end of IPD.
4. Definitions and explanations of the key terms used in the IES and the *Framework for International Education Standards for Professional Accountants and Aspiring Professional Accountants* (2015) are set out in the *International Education Standards Glossary of Terms* (2026).

Effective Date

5. IES 3 is effective from July 1, 2026.

Objective (Ref: Para. A8)

6. The objective of IES 3 is to establish the professional skills that aspiring professional accountants need to develop and demonstrate by the end of IPD, to perform a role as a professional accountant.

Requirements

Learning Outcomes for Professional Skills (Ref: Para. A9–A16)

7. IFAC member organizations shall prescribe the learning outcomes for professional skills to be achieved by aspiring professional accountants by the end of IPD. These learning outcomes shall include those listed in Table A.

Table A: Learning Outcomes for Professional Skills

Competence Area (Level of Proficiency¹)	Learning Outcomes
(a) Intellectual (Intermediate)	(i) Evaluate data and information from a variety of sources and perspectives through research, collaboration, integration, and analysis.
	(ii) Identify when it is appropriate to consult with experts.
	(iii) Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems, form judgments, make informed decisions, and reach well-reasoned conclusions.
	(iv) Recommend solutions to unstructured, multi-faceted problems.
	(v) Evaluate changing facts and circumstances to solve problems, form judgments, make informed decisions, and reach well-reasoned conclusions.
(b) Interpersonal and communication (Intermediate)	(i) Demonstrate effective communication, collaboration, and cooperation, including when working with or within multi-disciplinary teams.
	(ii) Communicate clearly and concisely with a range of stakeholders.
	(iii) Apply key concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in communication, considering and respecting language and contextual differences.
	(iv) Apply active listening and effective questioning techniques.
	(v) Apply negotiation skills to reach solutions and agreements.
	(vi) Apply consultative skills to minimize or resolve conflict, solve problems, and maximize opportunities.
	(vii) Present informed views and ideas to influence others to provide support and commitment.
(c) Personal (Intermediate)	(i) Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning.
	(ii) Set high personal standards of performance and monitor through reflective activity and feedback from others.
	(iii) Manage time and resources to achieve professional commitments.
	(iv) Anticipate challenges and plan potential solutions.
	(v) Demonstrate intellectual curiosity to emerging ideas and practices.
	(vi) Identify the potential impact of personal and organizational bias.

¹ The level of proficiency for a competence area to be achieved by the end of IPD (as outlined in Appendix 1).

Competence Area (Level of Proficiency¹)	Learning Outcomes
(d) Organizational (Intermediate)	(i) Undertake assignments in accordance with established practices to meet prescribed deadlines.
	(ii) Review own work and that of others to determine whether it complies with an organization's quality standards.
	(iii) Apply people management skills to motivate and develop others.
	(iv) Apply delegation skills to deliver assignments.
	(v) Apply leadership skills to influence others to work towards organizational goals.

Review of Professional Accounting Education Programs (Ref: Para. A17–A18)

8. IFAC member organizations shall regularly review and update professional accounting education programs that are designed to achieve the learning outcomes in IES 3.

Formal Assessment of Professional Skills (Ref: Para. A19–A20)

9. IFAC member organizations shall establish appropriate formal assessment activities to assess the professional skills of aspiring professional accountants.

Explanatory Material

Scope of this Standard (Ref: Para. 1–4)

- A1. An aspiring professional accountant is an individual who has commenced a professional accounting education program as part of IPD. IPD is the learning and development through which aspiring professional accountants first develop competence leading to performing a role as a professional accountant. IPD builds on general education and includes professional accounting education, practical experience, and assessment. IPD continues until aspiring professional accountants can demonstrate the professional competence required for their chosen roles in the accountancy profession.
- A2. Internationally, there are significant legal and regulatory differences that determine the point of qualification (or licensing) of professional accountants. Each IFAC member organization may define the appropriate relationship between the end of IPD and the point of qualification (or licensing) for its members.
- A3. Professional competence can be described and categorized in many different ways. Within the IESs, 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 (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes.

- A4. The inclusion of professional skills in IPD lays the base for performing a role as a professional accountant. Further development of professional skills is a focus of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which is covered in IES 7, *Continuing Professional Development* (2020).
- A5. Within IES 3, professional skills are categorized into four competence areas:
- (a) *Intellectual* relates to the ability of a professional accountant to solve problems, make decisions, adapt to change, and exercise professional judgment;
 - (b) *Interpersonal and communication* relate to the ability of a professional accountant to work and interact effectively with others, including when working with or within multi-disciplinary teams;
 - (c) *Personal* relates to the personal attitudes and behavior of a professional accountant; and
 - (d) *Organizational* relates to the ability of a professional accountant to work effectively with or within an organization to obtain the optimal results or outcomes from the people and resources available.
- A6. A competence area is a category for which a set of related learning outcomes can be specified. Competence areas within professional skills include intellectual and organizational; competence areas within technical competence include financial accounting and reporting, taxation, and economics; and competence areas within professional values, ethics, and attitudes include ethical principles as well as professional skepticism and professional judgment.
- A7. Learning outcomes 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 professional accounting education program.

Objective (Ref: Para. 6)

- A8. Establishing the professional skills that aspiring professional accountants need to develop and demonstrate by the end of IPD serves several purposes. It protects the public interest, enhances the quality of the work of professional accountants and promotes the credibility of the accountancy profession.

Learning Outcomes for Professional Skills (Ref: Para. 7)

- A9. Table A lists the learning outcomes for professional skills to be achieved by aspiring professional accountants by the end of IPD, regardless of their intended future accounting specialization or role. These learning outcomes provide the base to enable professional accountants to develop specializations in different accounting roles, for example an audit engagement partner, a taxation specialist, or a sustainability reporting manager.
- A10. In the design of professional accounting education programs, the four competence areas listed in Table A may not be identical to the names of prescribed courses or subjects. Also, the learning outcomes associated with one competence area (for example, organizational) may be achieved across more than one course or subject. The achievement of some learning outcomes (for example, those within intellectual) may extend across several different courses or subjects, none of which may be devoted solely to that competence area.

- A11. Learning outcomes are written to allow for principles-based interpretation by IFAC member organizations during the design of their professional accounting education programs. For example, within intellectual, learning outcome (v) refers to facts and circumstances, which includes both financial and non-financial facts and circumstances.
- A12. There are many ways to describe and classify levels of proficiency. The description developed for purposes of the IES is provided in Appendix 1, Description of Levels of Proficiency.
- A13. In Table A, each competence area has been assigned a level of proficiency that aspiring professional accountants are expected to achieve by the end of IPD. This level of proficiency indicates the context in which the relevant learning outcomes are expected to be demonstrated. Together, the learning outcomes and the level of proficiency of the competence area provide information to help IFAC member organizations design their professional accounting education programs.
- A14. The competence areas of IES 3 are at an intermediate level. IFAC member organizations determine the appropriate way to include the IES 3 learning outcomes in the design of their professional accounting education programs at a moderate level of ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty.
- A15. In professional accounting education programs, an IFAC member organization may:
- (a) include additional competence areas;
 - (b) increase the level of proficiency for some competence areas; or
 - (c) develop additional learning outcomes that are not specified in IES 3.

This may occur when an IFAC member organization prepares aspiring professional accountants to work within a particular industry sector (for example, the public sector) or for a particular role (for example, a management accountant or an auditor).

- A16. IFAC member organizations, educators, and other stakeholders are encouraged to identify the most appropriate approach to learning and development for professional skills, taking into consideration the national and cultural environment. An appropriate approach is likely to include a mixture of learning and development activities which combine structured learning programs and practical experience. For example, practical experience supervisors play an important role in helping aspiring professional accountants to develop professional skills within the workplace.

Review of Professional Accounting Education Programs (Ref: Para. 8)

- A17. Professional accounting education programs are designed to support aspiring professional accountants to develop the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD. Such programs may include formal education delivered through qualifications and courses offered by universities, other higher education providers, IFAC member organizations, and employers, as well as workplace training. The design of professional accounting education programs may involve substantive input from stakeholders other than IFAC member organizations.
- A18. The requirement to review and update professional accounting education programs on a regular basis reflects the rapidly-changing and complex environment within which professional accountants operate. A typical review cycle may be three to five years, but it may be appropriate to undertake a more frequent review, for example to take account of changes in legislation, regulations, and standards relevant to professional accountants.

Formal Assessment of Professional Skills (Ref: Para. 9)

- A19. IES 6, *Initial Professional Development – Formal Assessment of Professional Competence* (2026), provides the principles that apply to the design, delivery, and oversight of assessment activities used to formally assess the professional skills and other elements of professional competence.
- A20. Various formal assessment activities can be used to assess the professional skills of aspiring professional accountants. IPD assessment activities can be delivered in different formats. Some examples of formats may include: (a) written or computer-based examinations, (b) presentations, (c) case studies, (d) simulations, (e) workplace assessment by employers, and (f) portfolio of evidence on completion of workplace activities. Presentations and simulations are some examples of activities that enable aspiring professional accountants to develop and demonstrate the required level of professional competence related to professional skills within a professional accounting education program.

Description of Levels of Proficiency

This description of levels of proficiency supports the use of learning outcomes in publications such as International Education Standards (IESs) 2, 3, and 4. It provides descriptions of three levels of proficiency. These descriptions, together with the directive verbs used in learning outcomes, provide information to help IFAC 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"> Defining, explaining, summarizing, and interpreting the underlying principles and theories of relevant areas of technical competence to complete tasks while working under appropriate supervision; Performing assigned tasks by using the appropriate professional skills; Recognizing the importance of professional values, ethics, and attitudes in performing assigned tasks; Solving simple problems, and referring complex tasks or problems to supervisors or those with specialized expertise; and Providing information and explaining ideas in a clear manner, using oral and written communications. <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"> Independently applying, comparing, and analyzing underlying principles and theories from relevant areas of technical competence to complete work assignments and make decisions; Combining technical competence and professional skills to complete work assignments; Applying professional values, ethics, and attitudes to work assignments; and Presenting information and explaining ideas in a clear manner, using oral and written communications, to accounting and non-accounting stakeholders. <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"> 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

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

Exposure Drafts, Consultation Papers, and other IFAC publications are published by, and copyright of, IFAC.

IFAC does not accept responsibility for loss caused to any person who acts or refrains from acting in reliance on the material in this publication, whether such loss is caused by negligence or otherwise.

The IFAC logo, 'International Federation of Accountants', 'International Education Standards' 'IES', and 'IFAC' are registered trademarks and service marks of IFAC in the US and other countries.

Copyright © March 2025 by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). All rights reserved. Written permission from IFAC is required to reproduce, store or transmit, or to make other similar uses of, this document, save for where the document is being used for individual, non-commercial use only. Contact permissions@ifac.org.

Published by:



(Back cover)