

INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS OF UGANDA

PRACTICAL TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR TRAINEES AND EMPLOYERS

April 2016

1. Introduction

These guidelines are issued by the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda (ICPAU) ('the Institute').

The aim of practical training is to provide valuable work experience by sharpening and adding to the knowledge and skills a trainee has obtained on the Certified Public Accountants course. It is therefore important that trainees receive practical training, in the work place, in accountancy related topics, to a sufficient blend of depth and breadth to operate competently before he or she becomes a Certified Public Accountant.

The benefits of undertaking practical training with an approved employer ('approved employer'), under the direct supervision of a professional accountant ('a supervisor') include:

- Becoming aware of the environment in which services are provided;

- Enhancing their understanding of organisations, professional work relationships and how business works;

- 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.

The Institute has previously recognised that practical training must be achieved before a trainee is admitted to full membership of ICPAU, but the practical training processes and requirements are now being modified in order to ensure consistency and compliance with International Education Standard 5 on Practical Experience.

These guidelines explain the new practical training process and requirements.

2. ICPAU Membership

To become a member of the Institute, a trainee must successfully complete the Institute's qualifying examinations and practical training requirements.

By definition, the Institute is an accountancy body. Consequently, the period of practical training must be completed in accountancy related work.

3. Period of Practical Training

Practical training is gained with an approved employer, under the guidance of a supervisor.

A trainee must undertake three years of work experience with an approved employer in relevant employment. Relevant employment excludes time spent on in-house training courses, ICPAU courses, holidays and general administration. Illness is also excluded. The work experience requirements therefore include purely practical work experience.

If a trainee is working in an approved teaching institution, this will get a credit of one year's practical training. That trainee will be required to do the other two years with an approved employer in public practice or within the public sector or in industry. A list of approved teaching institutions is available from ICPAU.

The three year practical training can be obtained before, during or after exam qualification.

However, the trainee must apply for ICPAU membership no more than five years after exam qualification.

4. Approved Employers

Approved employers are organisations that have demonstrated to the Institute that they can offer trainees the range and depth of training and work experience and the appropriate professional environment in which to develop the competencies required to become a Certified Public Accountant. Completing their practical training with an approved employer is an assurance for the trainee and the Institute that the trainee is offered planned, supervised and relevant experience that meets the Institute's requirements.

Trainees are responsible for finding their own employment. Organisations can apply for Institute approval using the standard approval application form.

5. Supervisors

The Institute recognises the pivotal role that a supervisor plays in monitoring a trainee's practical training and helping to prepare the trainee towards becoming a future member of the Institute. The supervisor ensures that:

- The trainee is able to seek guidance and advice on matters relating to their practical training.
- The trainee's practical training is properly monitored, guided and verified.
- When the trainee applies for membership, the trainee has the necessary practical training.

The supervisor will act as a professional role model and will exhibit a high level of professionalism at all times.

The supervisor should be a member of ICPAU. The supervisor has the responsibility of directing, advising and assisting trainees in acquiring sufficient practical training. In workplaces without ICPAU members, the external auditors may be asked to supervise the trainee.

Supervisors must have a current understanding of:

- The Institute's admissions policy.
- The Institute's Code of Ethics.
- The issues facing the profession.
- The professional knowledge and skills required of trainees.
- The expectations associated with supervision of practical training.
- The professional and technical issues relevant to practical training.
- The Institute's practical training standards.

Supervisors have the following responsibilities:

- To understand trainees' work, and their need to gain relevant practical training.
- To regularly review trainees' experience.
- To support trainees' access to varied practical training.
- To communicate regularly and effectively with trainees, and with trainees' line managers where appropriate.
- To provide trainees with appropriate supervision, mentoring, counseling, and evaluation.
- To provide feedback to trainees on their practical training, and assess their achievement of competences; an.
- To report to the Institute their assessment of trainees' (a) application of ethical judgment, (b) behavior, and (c) development of the professional knowledge and skills.

The Institute may limit the maximum number of trainees reporting to a single supervisor at one time, to ensure that supervisors provide each trainee with appropriate supervision, mentoring, counseling and evaluation. The Institute may set additional requirements to be met by supervisors.

6. Public Practice

To obtain a practising certificate, one must be enrolled and registered as a member of the Institute. A member of the Institute also needs to obtain at least three years of auditing experience in public practice.

7. Recording Practical Training

It is important to ensure that a comprehensive and continuous record of all practical training is kept. This serves as reference source for the trainee and their supervisor to track and plan their progress against the Institute's practical training requirements.

It is the responsibility of the trainee to maintain a record of their practical training, and it is the supervisor's responsibility to verify the experience gained against the competencies set by the Institute. It is therefore important the trainee and their supervisor keep records in case of any discrepancies.

At regular intervals, the supervisor and trainee should assess the achievement of each competency area and adjust work schedules accordingly and the trainee should be assigned work which involves receiving the experience in question.

Trainees should record their practical training gained in the relevant forms (the logbook) provided by the Institute. Further guidance on the completion is available in the Logbook Guidelines.

8. Institute Review

When a trainee wishes to apply to the Institute for membership, the logbook forms the prime document to evidence that the work experience has been successfully achieved.

The Institute will review the logbook during the training contract period and again on completion of the training contract, prior to the admission of a trainee to membership of the Institute.

9. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

1. Why is there a requirement to complete practical training as part of the ICPAU qualification?

Practical training provides valuable work experience by sharpening and adding to the knowledge and skills a trainee has obtained on the Certified Public Accountants course.

2. How do I commence my practical training?

As soon as you secure acceptable training or work placement, identify whether the employer is approved. If the employer is approved, a supervisor will be appointed and a training contract will be completed. Remember, your training can commence during or after completion of your CPA course.

If your employer is not approved, they will need to apply to ICPAU for approval.

3. How do I notify ICPAU if my supervisor changes?

It is the responsibility of your employer to inform ICPAU of any changes to supervisors.

4. Where do I record my practical experience?

The practical training is recorded in the logbook. The logbook allows you to record your progress and the skills acquired. Your supervisor will be required to sign off after he or she reviews your logbook. Ensure you take your logbook with you to every meeting with your supervisor.

5. What happens at the end of my training contract?

At the end of your training, you must submit your signed-off logbook to ICPAU.

Note that the logbook will be reviewed by ICPAU during your training contract too.

6. When I apply for ICPAU membership, what will ICPAU need?

At the end of your training, you must submit your signed-off logbook to ICPAU.

Note that under special circumstances, ICPAU may request to review further details of the work performed.

7. If I lose my job, can I carry forward experience acquired in previous job and if so, for how long?

Yes, experience acquired can be carried forward as you continue to seek an alternative employer. Such experience, so long as it is verifiable, can be carried forward for a period of 6 years.

8. I am unable to meet face to face with my supervisor on a regular basis. How do I get him/her to sign-off the logbook?

If you are unable to meet, send a copy of the logbook to your supervisor to sign, date and return to you.

9. Is recognition given for the Masters Degree I have attained?

Yes, a period of relevant graduate (beyond undergraduate e.g. masters) education with a strong element of practical application and research in the accountancy field may earn a trainee one year's credit of practical training. This would need to have been undertaken at an approved teaching institution. A list of approved teaching institutions is available from ICPAU.

10. Does ICPAU offer any training opportunities to its students?

ICPAU does not directly offer any opportunities for practical training. Where

employers request ICPAU for trainees, such opportunities will be widely publicised to all students.

Accountancy firms registered with ICPAU have committed to provide trainees (ICPAU students and graduates) with opportunities for practical training. Trainees are encouraged to take up such opportunities.

It is important to note, that undertaking practical training in addition to the acquisition of knowledge through your CPA course will make you highly desirable to any potential employers.