

POSITIONAL PAPER: CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY CHANGE

1. Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) involves maintaining and enhancing the knowledge, skills and experience related to professional activities following the completion of formal training. It requires the development of those personal qualities that are needed for carrying out professional and technical duties during a professional's life.

This definition covers the multiple purposes of CPD, namely;

- Continual maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Development of personal qualities required to carry out professional duties.
- Life-long learning.
- Personal responsibility for one's learning.

SAICA is the pre-eminent accountancy body in South Africa. It inspires, progresses and promotes the profession of accountancy with a core focus on professional development. It seeks to provide leadership to maintain and advance the ideals of professionalism in the interests of the accounting profession and the services it provides to the public. Compulsory CPD for all members and associates¹ is one way SAICA safeguards that the accounting profession is consistent with best practice standards.

Competence to practice is dependent upon the initial acquisition and further maintenance of knowledge and skills and can be linked to individual behaviours and abilities. CPD is a life-long process of professional growth through the development and maintenance of continued competence within both generalist and specialist areas of practice. CPD can be stimulated by reflection or experience and other learning which may occur in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, formal education programs, courses, self-study or peer learning. To enhance the practice of Chartered Accountants (CAs) and associates these activities should be diverse, promote reflective practice, and improve and extend professional competence.

The growth in knowledge and the speed of technological change, plus the obsolescence of existing knowledge means that the qualifying programme of professional education can no longer be seen as a career-long standing statement of professional competence; CPD is essential for professional practice.

¹ Associate General Accountant (SA) and Accounting Technicians (SA)

Changes in knowledge, new developments and technological changes are fundamentally altering the way professionals work and interact. Such change presents tough challenges not just for the professionals themselves but also for their institutions. There is a need to adapt and to reshape for the future. These are challenges SAICA must take on as they seek to support their members. But as they do, SAICA must answer to three stakeholders: their members; the industry at large; and the public interest. These must be balanced to take as clear a view as possible into the future for the advancement of the profession. In this regard, SAICA is proposing changes to its current CPD policy and is in the process of developing the CA 2025 Competency Framework.

2. SAICA's role

For the layperson, even for experts, gauging the potential quality of the service offered by a professional can be extremely hard without the benefit of previous experience. The damage of choosing, for example, the wrong doctor, lawyer, engineer or accountant could be immense. A professional body's core function is to provide public trust in its members.

SAICA is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and practice of CAs and associates through developing, supporting, regulating and promoting professional standards for technical and ethical competence. SAICA is concerned with the public benefit as well as the reputation of its registered professionals. SAICA aims to maintain and develop professionalism and thereby secure high-quality professional services for society.

To fulfil its function, SAICA sets standards, technical and ethical, that must be achieved, and they ensure that they are maintained and enhanced throughout a professional's career; this supports the public's trust.

Beyond this, they seek to raise the standards of the profession, increase understanding and protect the public interest by having mandatory CPD for all its members and associates.

SAICA's objective of having a CPD policy is to protect the public interest by ensuring there is a framework within which the members commit to on-going learning and development throughout their careers, demonstrating the competence required in relation to the specific roles an accountant performs. Having a robust CPD policy ultimately assists in protecting the SAICA brands.

SAICA influences the life-long learning of its members through its programmes and policies. The pathway to qualification focuses on life-long learning and the Code of Ethics. The Code includes the fundamental principle of professional competence and due care which requires all professional accountants to maintain professional knowledge and skills at the level required to ensure that a client or employer receives competent professional service based on current developments in practice, legislation and techniques and acts diligently and in accordance with applicable technical and professional standards.

SAICA is proposing a change in focus as the current CPD policy promotes an input based approach and doesn't specifically focus on the individual as a responsible life-long learner. The current policy offers members and associates the choice of following an input or output based approach. However, the assessment of an individual's CPD is based on a set number of hours per year and an accumulative number of hours over a three year period. Although SAICA provides members with a number of

mechanisms to satisfy their CPD requirements and to enhance their professional development, SAICA is of the view that an output-based approach to CPD will promote a more holistic view of CPD and better drive the core attitude / behaviour of life-long learning.

To develop a policy that encourages life-long learning and the desire to maintain competence, stay abreast of new developments and develop competence for a changing profession, SAICA drew on a number of theories and principles. The principles of adult learning were core to SAICA's review of its CPD policy.

3. The principles of adult learning

It has long been understood that adults have different learning needs to children; this was formally identified by Malcolm Knowles in the 1950s. He realised that adults were not passive receptacles of knowledge and experiences. Adults need to engage differently, for example:

- a. They need to know why they are learning something. Adults want to understand the value. They want their learning experiences to meet their needs, be relevant and help them achieve their goals.
- b. Adult learners want respect and to be seen as capable learners (Self-concept). They should be offered choices and be encouraged to set their own learning objectives.
- c. Adult learners bring their life experiences and learning with them. They should be given the opportunity to use their existing knowledge and experience, which they can apply to new learning experiences.
- d. Adults are *ready to learn* when they identify something they want to know or become proficient at, or when they experience something that connects with their life situations. They become ready to learn things in order to cope effectively with real-life situations. Adult learners are goal focused, seek timely learning and need clear learning goals.
- e. Adult learners are responsive to external and internal motivators. These could range from a better salary to more internal factors, such as increased job satisfaction, better quality of life or personal growth and development.

Motivation can be diminished by learning experiences that do not embrace adult learning principles. The current focus on hours and time-based activities is not considered useful in developing self-determined, life-long learners. Ultimately, professionals learn best within the context and dilemmas of daily practice and when reflecting on one's own developmental needs; this is qualitative and not measured by time.

In addition to recognising the principles of life-long learning, SAICA also acknowledges and recognises that reflective behaviour is a mark of a professional and that the principles of reflection should be encouraged and developed in all SAICA members and associates.

4. Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a modern term for an ancient method of self-improvement. However, reflection is more than deep thinking and discussing – it is also about deconstructing or pulling things apart to

gain a better understanding, to see different connections and to appreciate different perspectives. Reflection can benefit individuals by:

- Enabling them to think more clearly and holistically about issues, leading to greater insight and learning.
- Connecting their more rational decision-making processes to more effective and experiential learning processes.
- Challenging them to be more honest about their behaviour and beliefs.
- Creating the opportunity to consider the implications of any past or future learning.
- Acting as a safeguard against making impulsive decisions.

Essentially reflective practice is a method of assessing our own thoughts and actions, for personal learning and development. For many people, this is a natural and instinctive activity.

The main competencies required to be a reflective practitioner are:

- Self-knowledge – insight and understanding of one's own capabilities, character and motivators.
- Critical thinking – Making use of the principles of logic, adhering to rigorous standards of evidence and careful analysis of any claims or beliefs.
- Inquisitiveness – A willingness to be inquisitive and ask questions.
- Emotional intelligence – Ability to identify and manage emotions as well as those of others.

To be a life-long learner practitioners must have the ability to reflect on their learning needs, learning participation and the outcomes of learning. Practitioners who remain relevant and up to date can reflect and respond to such reflection meaningfully and timely.

To drive a culture of reflective practice within the profession, SAICA is proposing that all members and associates make use of a reflective plan (PAR²) when planning, executing and reflecting on their own CPD. The reflective plan requires members to follow a three-step process:

- 1) Plan:
 - a. Write down current and future responsibilities and roles
 - b. Critically evaluate current performance and areas for development in desired future roles.
- 2) Act:
 - a. Undertake activities/programmes/courses around the identified areas of development.
- 3) Reflect
 - a. Reflect on learning and expected outcomes. Critically evaluate if the learning objectives were achieved.
 - b. List those areas that require additional development and include them in the next reflective cycle (Plan).

² Plan, Action, Reflect. A template of the plan will be available on SAICA's website.

c. Reflection and planning must cover the core areas of the proposed 2025 competency framework³:

Competency areas / categories	Specific competencies (if applicable)
Technical knowledge	1 Technical expertise
	2 Business acumen
	3 Industry knowledge
	4 Strategy and risk management
Lifelong learning (CPD)	5 Lifelong learning
Ethics	6 Ethical and professional behaviour
Technology and communication	7 Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
	8 Data analytics – big data
	9 Technological skills/innovation
Interpersonal skills	10 Adaptability
	11 Flexibility
	12 People skills
	13 Self-management
	14 Teamwork
	15 Time management
Higher order thinking skills	16 Analytical (critical) thinking
	17 Integrated thinking
	18 Problem-solving
	19 Professional judgment
	20 Strategic thinking
Leadership and citizenship skills	21 Citizenship
	22 Entrepreneurial skills
	23 Innovation skills
	24 Leadership

³ The 2025 Competency Framework is a draft format. This document and related documents will be updated once the Competency Framework is finalised.

In line with SAICA’s emphasis on output-based CPD, SAICA is proposing that members and associates engage in reflective planning at least once per annum, or as frequently as required. Members and associates will be encouraged to use peer networks, workplace development feedback and peer review to assist them in reflecting on their own developmental needs. In addition, SAICA will guide its practitioners in their reflection by publishing the competency framework and a list of significant changes or developments that affect the industry. Members will be encouraged to use the competency framework and the list of new learning areas when reflecting on their developmental needs. Certain learning areas, topics or standards may be of such importance to the profession that either all members and associates or only certain sectors of the profession⁴ may be required to cover the learning areas. SAICA will communicate compulsory areas of CPD, if and when required. How members and associates cover the learning module will be dependent on their circumstances. However, if a compulsory learning area has been prescribed; SAICA will include it in the annual declaration and it will be monitored through the regular monitoring procedures.

The two core theories of adult learning principles and reflective practice make up the back bone of SAICA’s revised CPD policy. Below is a table setting out SAICA’s proposed CPD policy and the rationale that supports SAICA’s proposed changes:

CPD policy	Why?
All practising SAICA members and associates are required to undertake some form of CPD.	Professionalism does not end with educational qualifications, recognition and a designation. Compulsory CPD for its members and associates is one way for SAICA to safeguard that the accounting profession is consistent with best practice standards. SAICA aims to maintain and develop professionalism and thereby secure high-quality professional services for society. SAICA believes CPD is essential for competent professionalism.
Members and associates are required to follow a CPD reflective plan that uses an iterative approach to Plan, Act and Reflect (PAR). Members are required to complete a CPD reflective plan at least annually or as often as is required.	In line with SAICA’s understanding of adult learning principles and reflective practice, SAICA has moved towards a self-directed, autonomous, outcomes-based approach to learning. As opposed to an activity, hours based approach. It is SAICA’s view that an output-based approach will enhance professionalism and competence within the profession.
Members and associates are required to declare their compliance with the CPD policy on an annual basis.	Although the CPD system is based on trust and professionalism, as a responsible professional membership body SAICA needs to ensure that its standards are maintained and that public trust in the profession is retained. Monitoring of the reflective plan is the most meaningful

⁴ For example; auditors or tax professionals

	mechanism at SAICA's disposal; it speaks to the heart of a professional's reflective practice.
There will be no exemptions for submitting the annual CPD declaration.	Given the output-based nature of the policy and the fact that members are required to reflect on their responsibilities and identify areas of development, exemptions are no longer required. Retired members or those who are no longer practising will state their circumstances on the annual return. However, any practitioner who is still interacting with the public on a professional basis has a professional responsibility to stay up-to-date and competent for the work they undertake. They must reflect and act on their personal circumstances.
Members who wish to have their membership reinstated after an absence of three years will have to demonstrate to SAICA that they have stayed up to date.	SAICA has a responsibility to the public to ensure that professionals who have been absent from the profession are sufficiently competent to be registered and to practice. Professionals who wish to be reinstated must submit a declaration for similar to the annual declaration as well as a CPD reflective form.
CPD cycle records (declarations and reflective forms) must be kept for three years.	Given the dynamic nature of the profession and the currency of knowledge, SAICA considers three years as appropriate for audit purposes.
On an annual basis, SAICA will randomly select members' CPD reflective cycle plan to be audited. The monitoring sample will be weighted to include members with high-risk responsibilities and those who work in the public interest domain.	SAICA monitors to satisfy itself that its standards are maintained and that public trust in the profession is retained. SAICA will work with non-compliant members to assist them in their professional development.
If a reciprocal member satisfies the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements and obligations relating to membership of one Party, the other Party will recognise this as meeting its own standard CPD requirements.	SAICA will accept the CPD requirements of other professional bodies with whom it has a reciprocity agreement; this is in line with SAICA's support of adult learning principles.

5. In Closing

This document has set out the core principles that have led SAICA's deliberations on changes to the CPD policy. It is SAICA's goal that the policy influences the behaviour and values of its practitioners and that it drives a spirit of development and continual reflection. SAICA will measure the success of its revised policy through the level of compliance with the policy, the level of reflection demonstrated through the reflective plans and the overall behaviour and reputation of the profession.

Reference list

1. "Professional Development and Renewal of Standard Teaching License". ArkansasEd.org. Arkansas Department of Education. Archived from the original on 30 April 2009
2. Fraser, S.W., Greenhalgh, T. 2001 Coping with complexity: educating for capability *British Medical Journal*323:799-803
3. Knowles, Malcolm; Holton, E. F., III; Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). Burlington, MA: Elsevier.
4. Muhammad Azizul Islam, PhD (RMIT), CPA (Australia), CA (CA ANZ) Associate Professor & Team Leader of Accounting for Social and Environmental Sustainability Research Group, School of Accountancy, QUT, Brisbane, Australia | February 10, 2017
5. Phipps, S. T. A., Prieto, L. C., & Ndinguri, E. N. (2013). Teaching an old dog new tricks: Investigating how age, ability and self-efficacy influence intentions to learn and learning among participants in adult education. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 17(1), 13-25.
6. Watkins, J. UK professional associations and continuing professional development: a new direction?. *Int J Life Educ.* 1999; 18:61–75.
7. Boud, D., Keogh, R., Walker, D. 2000*Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* Kogan Page London
8. Curry, E. L. (1992). The impact of professional associations. *Journal of Library Administration*, 16(12), 45-54.
9. Epstein, R.M 1999 Mindful practice *Journal of the American Medical Association* 282:833-839
10. Friedman, A., Phillips, M. Continuing professional development: developing a vision. *J Work Educ.* 2004; 17:361–376.

11. Kloosterman, V. (2016), Continuing professional development, Continuing professional development.org.
12. Madden, C A & Mitchell, V A (1993) Professions, standards and competence: a survey of continuing education for the professions University of Bristol, Department for Continuing Education
13. Schön, D.A. 1983. The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action, London: Temple Smith.
14. The Edge Commission, Collaboration for Change: The Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism, April 201
15. UNESCO (2016). 3rd global report on adult learning and education: the impact of adult learning and education on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life