

# CPA Approved Training Partner Guide for Employers

## CPA Approved Training Partner Guide

The following guide provides useful information about the CPA training requirements for Approved Training Partners employing CPA trainees.

### What is an Approved Training Partner?

*An organisation, or a unit within an organisation, approved by the CPA Institute as providing a suitable environment in which trainees gain relevant supervised experience before qualification as a Certified Public Accountant.*

### What are the CPA training requirements?

Trainees must obtain 3 years relevant supervised training prior to being eligible to apply for membership. It must be progressive, supervised and entail structured feedback. A training record (see appendix) must be submitted to the Institute on an annual basis.

### Who should supervise training?

A professional accountant must be assigned to mentor each trainee. A professional accountant is defined as *“A person who is a member of an IFAC body.”* Source - International Accounting Education Standards Board, (IAESB). The IAESB is the education standard setting board of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). The CPA Institute along with other leading professional bodies of accountants worldwide is a founding member of IFAC. The mentor, with the trainee will identify the relevant learning and development needs of the trainee and agree a training plan. At least 50% of the training must be supervised by a professional accountant. In some aspects of training a trainee maybe directly supervised by a person with another relevant qualification. (An example may be where the trainee is assigned to a cross functional team introducing or upgrading an IT system. The work of the project may be supervised by a suitably qualified IT professional).

### What is the role of the Mentor?

A mentor supports the trainee in his/her professional development improving his/her knowledge, behaviour and technical competencies. Mentors specific responsibilities may vary with the environment in which the mentor and their trainee operate. *“A mentor is a professional accountant who is responsible for guiding and assisting trainees and for assisting in the development of the trainee’s competence.”* Source - IAESB.

Mentors should aim to:

- Understand trainees’ work, and their need to gain relevant practical experience for qualification as a Certified Public Accountant.
- Regularly review trainees experience ideally quarterly or at least annually with their learning and development needs re-assessed.
- Influence trainees’ access to varied relevant practical experience.
- Communicate regularly and effectively with trainees, and with trainees’ line managers, where the mentor is not the line manager, as appropriate.
- Provide trainees with appropriate supervision, mentoring, coaching, and evaluation.
- Provide feedback to trainees’ on their practical experience, and assess their achievement of the required competences and behavioural attributes of a CPA.

- Report to CPA on their assessment of trainee(s) :
  - (a) Technical competence
  - (b) Application of ethical judgment,
  - (c) Behavioural Attributes
  - (d) Development of the professional knowledge and skills required for qualification as a professional accountant.

### **What is relevant training?**

Relevant training is where trainees gain the professional competence required to be effective in a number of roles in business as a qualified accountant. Professional competence comprises of two elements :

- Technical expertise
- Behavioural attributes

The professional competence is influenced by two inter-related variables – range (breadth of knowledge & skills) and depth (level of expertise), each of which is developed over time through a process of formal study and practical experience.

#### **- Technical Expertise**

There are six competency areas which reflect the broad range of work areas to which accountants apply their expertise. The six areas are :

1. Financial Accounting
2. Auditing & Statutory Compliance
3. Taxation
4. Information & Financial Systems
5. Corporate Planning, Control & Treasury Management
6. General Management

There are also two levels of expertise specified – a Professional Level and an In-depth Level – within each field. CPA Trainees must reach a Professional Level in each of six competency fields and an In-depth Level in at least two of them. (Professional Level competence is usually acquired and demonstrated through the education and examination process).

The nature of the trainees' work experience and training environment will usually determine the areas of 'in-depth' competence. (For example, those intending to apply eventually for a practising certificate with audit qualification must have reached 'in-depth' competence in at least Auditing and Financial Accounting and successfully completed the Institute's Practice and Audit Orientation Course and pass the associated examination). Trainees also develop the capacity for reflection and self evaluation which they carry through their careers so as to inform their commitment to continuous improvement and continued professional development.

The Professional and In-depth levels are explained below :

**‘Professional Level’ denotes that a person:**

- Has a thorough understanding of and is able to apply the concepts and principles involved.
- Fully understands the legal/regulatory requirements, their application and can recognise when to seek expert assistance.
- Performing most ‘non-specialist’ tasks in the area competently, without supervision.
- Communicate finance-related information clearly and succinctly both verbally and in writing

**‘In-depth’ competence denotes that a person (in addition to the Professional Level Competence):**

- Has had exposure to working, unsupervised, on complex tasks in the area in a variety of situations and can exercise sound professional judgement on issues arising.
- Possesses a high degree of expertise in technical aspects of the work and can readily source additional knowledge if required.
- Can relate to the business/operational imperatives of the organisation and apply professional input effectively.

The technical competencies displayed by trainees throughout their training must be documented and agreed with their mentor in the quarterly review sections of the CPA training record or appended to the training record as required. Further information and examples of these Technical Competences is available on Page 5 -16 of the *“Competence Profile for Newly Qualified CPA’s”*.

**Behavioural Attributes:**

In addition to the above levels of expertise, all trainees must demonstrate their ethical values, professionalism, ability to work effectively with people, research and investigation skills, capacity for reflection and self evaluation and communications skills.. The skills and attributes required for this are defined as ‘Behavioural Attributes’. They fall into three categories:

1. **Professionalism and Personal Ethical Standards** (covering the areas of values, objectivity, etc.)
2. **Sensitivity to Business Needs** (covering how trainees view and interact with the business environment).
3. **Inter-Personal Effectiveness** (covering how trainees work with others to add value).

The behavioural attributes displayed by trainees throughout their training must be documented and agreed with their mentor in the quarterly review sections of the CPA training record or appended to the training record as required. Further information and examples of these Behavioural Attributes is available on Page 4 of the *“Competence Profile for Newly Qualified CPA’s”*.

The effectiveness of a trainee’s professional competence is achieved through the levels of expertise in the various competency fields applied by them, driven by their personal behavioural attributes. The CPA training programme is fully compliant with the International Education Standard (IES) 5, *Practical Experience Requirements*, published by the IAESB.

## Key Resources

### What resources does CPA provide?

The CPA Institute provides the following resources to support the delivery of the CPA qualification to trainees, educators and approved training partners.

- Training support for Approved Training Partners
- Open door policy for employers, mentors and trainees
- List of approved CPA educators
- Syllabus Content
- Past papers and suggested solutions free available from CPA website
- Relevant articles
- Educators' Briefing
- Monthly students ebuletin
- Accountancy Plus journal
- Feature rich website [www.cpaireland.ie](http://www.cpaireland.ie)

### What resources should the Approved Training Partner provide?

Each training partner should provide training and study support to CPA trainees.

#### Training Support

- Appoint and assign mentor(s) to trainee(s)
- Supervise the CPA trainee by a qualified professional accountant.
- Develop annual training plans for the trainee.
- Provide access to varied practical experience
- Review performance on a quarterly basis and provide feedback.
- Agree and sign off *Training Records for CPA Students*
- Ensure that the trainee submits *Training Records for CPA Students* to CPA annually.
- Ensure that the trainee satisfies the CPA IT Competency requirements.

#### Study Support

- Fees – contribute to first time tuition and study material costs.
- Study Leave – provide study leave for first time preparation for CPA examinations
- Provide study leave for first time sittings of CPA examinations. (see appendix for recommendations)

#### CPA Student Membership

- Support student with CPA registration, annual subscription and first time examination fees.

## ***Training Process Checklist***

- ✓ Assign Mentor to Trainee. (A mentor may have a maximum of 4 trainees assigned to them.)
- ✓ Agree Training Plan.
- ✓ Trainee and Mentor review Training performance quarterly.
- ✓ Mentor specifies in the review comments section on page 16 of the *Training Record for CPA Students* the technical competencies and behavioural attributes demonstrated by the trainee during that quarter.
- ✓ Mentor evaluates performances and provides feedback.
- ✓ Mentor undertakes a year end review with the trainee.
- ✓ Mentor signs off on the Annual Training Summary and Sign off on Page 17 and 18 of the *Training Record for CPA Students*.
- ✓ Trainee completes and submits the *Training Record for CPA Students* to the Institute.