

Benchmarking CA Education with the Best in the World

Being dynamic, Chartered Accountancy profession has been undergoing rapid transformation. Stereotypical image of a Chartered Accountant, tirelessly adding and subtracting figures is fast changing. Chief factors responsible for the change being, borderless economies, rapid developments in information technology, increasing strategic importance of chartered accountants as watchdogs and need for a stringent regulatory set up, plethora of financial instruments, increasing business complexities, increased emphasis on corporate social responsibilities and the like. These factors warrant that the competence of accountants should be bolstered.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is cognizant of the demands made on the profession. Therefore, it started the process of reviewing and revising its scheme of education and training in 2014. It set in a whole new approach for developing, updating and delivering chartered accountancy education and training of the future accountants. The process involved, amongst other things, a thorough study and benchmarking of not only International Education Standards (IES) issued by International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) but also of the education system followed by major International Accounting Bodies.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world, so rightly said Nelson Mandela. Our comprehensive CA education has the same potential in addition to sustained and future-oriented growth of our profession. With a vision that accountancy profession and accountancy education should constantly go hand in hand with global academic, technological and economic advancements, our Revised Scheme of education and training has been designed to benchmark Indian CA education with the best in the world.

The new Scheme is in line with relevant IES issued by IFAC. As per the revised scheme, the entry to CA profession in India is allowed to 10+2 passed out students who have to undergo entry level course called Foundation course. Alternatively, graduates and post graduates with requisite percentage of marks and Intermediate passed students of Institute of Company Secretaries of India and the Institute of Cost Accountants of India are allowed direct entry to the course. This is as per the requirements laid down in IES 1.

As desired by IES 2, the ICAI's Revised Scheme covers all the subjects/topics mentioned in this IES namely, Financial Accounting and Reporting, Management

Accounting, Finance and Financial Management, Taxation, Business Laws and Regulations, Audit and Assurance, Governance, Risk Management and Internal Control, Information Technology, Business and Organizational Environment, Economics, Business Strategy and Management so as to build the desired level of technical competence to enable candidates to function as competent professional accountants.

Various types of professional skills as mentioned in this IES namely, intellectual, interpersonal and communication, personal, and organizational are proposed to be honed through two Integrated Courses on Information Technology and Soft Skills. The period of practical experience has been kept as three years as prescribed in this IES. During this period, the candidates would be trained in all relevant areas-technical competence, professional skills and professional values, ethics and attitudes—which are necessary for performing a role as a professional accountant. This is as per the Revised IES 5 of IFAC.

Under the Revised Scheme, the entry to the CA profession has been made somewhat difficult. Now, appearance in Foundation examination (which will be partly descriptive and partly objective type) will be allowed only after passing Class XII examination. The Institute has taken due care that all contemporary areas having a relevance for the profession are included in the curriculum. Having regard to the importance of soft skills two Integrated Courses on Information Technology and Soft Skills (ICITSS) have been introduced. In order to have uninterrupted Practical training to the maximum possible extent, it is to be started after passing either one or both groups of Intermediate. Final examination can be taken only after completion of practical training and Advanced ICITSS.

Now that the basic framework of scheme of education and training has been put in place, matters relating to detailed syllabi, expected competency level at each stage of CA course, and all other relevant and related aspects will be finalised.

The ICAI had announced the Revised Scheme of Education and Training, which necessitated certain changes in the Chartered Accountants Regulations which have been sent for mandatory approval of the Government. Once approved, the Scheme shall be open for public comments for 45 days. This future-oriented drive of the ICAI will go a long way in making our students and future CAs more dynamic, industry friendly, practical in their strategic role as watchdogs and enabler of compliance and fiscal discipline. ■

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