

**PREFACE TO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON  
QUALITY CONTROL, AUDITING, REVIEW, OTHER  
ASSURANCE AND RELATED SERVICES**

(Effective as of December 15, 2009)

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## **Introduction**

1. This preface to the International Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services (International Standards or IAASB's Standards) is issued to facilitate understanding of the scope and authority of the pronouncements the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB) issues, as set forth in the IAASB's Terms of Reference.
2. The IAASB is committed to the goal of developing a set of International Standards which are generally accepted worldwide. IAASB members act in the common interest of the public at large and the worldwide accountancy profession. This could result in their taking a position on a matter that is not in accordance with current practice in their country or firm or not in accordance with the position taken by those who put them forward for membership of the IAASB.

## **The IAASB's Pronouncements**

3. The IAASB's pronouncements govern audit, review, other assurance and related services engagements that are conducted in accordance with International Standards. They do not override the local laws or regulations that govern the audit of historical financial statements or assurance engagements on other information in a particular country required to be followed in accordance with that country's national standards. In the event that local laws or regulations differ from, or conflict with, the IAASB's Standards on a particular subject, an engagement conducted in accordance with local laws or regulations will not automatically comply with the IAASB's Standards. A professional accountant should not represent compliance with the IAASB's Standards unless the professional accountant has complied fully with all of those relevant to the engagement.

## **The Authority Attaching to International Standards Issued by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board**

4. International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) are to be applied in the audit of historical financial information.
5. International Standards on Review Engagements (ISREs) are to be applied in the review of historical financial information.
6. International Standards on Assurance Engagements (ISAEs) are to be applied in assurance engagements other than audits or reviews of historical financial information.
7. International Standards on Related Services (ISRSs) are to be applied to compilation engagements, engagements to apply agreed upon procedures to information and other related services engagements as specified by the IAASB.



8. ISAs, ISREs, ISAEs and ISRSs are collectively referred to as the IAASB's Engagement Standards.
9. International Standards on Quality Control (ISQCs) are to be applied for all services falling under the IAASB's Engagement Standards.

#### **International Standards on Auditing**

10. ISAs are written in the context of an audit of financial statements<sup>1</sup> by an independent auditor. They are to be adapted as necessary in the circumstances when applied to audits of other historical financial information. The authority of ISAs is set out in ISA 200.<sup>2</sup>

#### **International Standards on Quality Control**

11. ISQCs are written to apply to firms in respect of all their services falling under the IAASB's Engagement Standards. The authority of ISQCs is set out in the introduction to the ISQCs.

#### **Other International Standards**

12. Some International Standards identified in paragraphs 5–7 contain: objectives, requirements, application and other explanatory material, introductory material and definitions. These terms are to be interpreted in a directly analogous way to how they are explained in the context of ISAs and financial statement audits in ISA 200.
13. Other International Standards identified in paragraphs 5–7 contain basic principles and essential procedures (identified in bold type lettering and by the word “should”) together with related guidance in the form of explanatory and other material, including appendices. The basic principles and essential procedures are to be understood and applied in the context of the explanatory and other material that provides guidance for their application. It is therefore necessary to consider the entire text of a Standard to understand and apply the basic principles and essential procedures.
14. The basic principles and essential procedures of a Standard are to be applied in all cases where they are relevant in the circumstances of the engagement. In exceptional circumstances, however, a professional accountant may judge it necessary to depart from a relevant essential procedure in order to achieve the purpose of that procedure. When such a situation arises, the professional accountant is required to document how alternative procedures performed

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, “financial statements” mean financial statements comprising historical financial information.

<sup>2</sup> ISA 200, “Overall Objectives of the Independent Auditor and the Conduct of an Audit in Accordance with International Standards on Auditing.”

achieve the purpose of the procedure and, unless otherwise clear, the reasons for the departure. The need for the professional accountant to depart from a relevant essential procedure is expected to arise only where, in the specific circumstances of the engagement, that procedure would be ineffective.

15. Appendices, which form part of the application material, are an integral part of a Standard. The purpose and intended use of an appendix are explained in the body of the related Standard or within the title and introduction of the appendix itself.

#### **Professional Judgment**

16. The nature of the International Standards requires the professional accountant to exercise professional judgment in applying them.

#### **Applicability of the International Standards**

17. The scope, effective date and any specific limitation of the applicability of a specific International Standard is made clear in the Standard. Unless otherwise stated in the International Standard, the professional accountant is permitted to apply an International Standard before the effective date specified therein.
18. International Standards are relevant to engagements in the public sector. When appropriate, additional considerations specific to public sector entities are included:
  - (a) Within the body of an International Standard in the case of ISAs and ISQCs; or
  - (b) In a Public Sector Perspective (PSP) appearing at the end of other International Standards.

#### **The Authority Attaching to Practice Statements Issued by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board**

19. International Auditing Practice Statements (IAPSSs) are issued to provide interpretive guidance and practical assistance to professional accountants in implementing ISAs and to promote good practice. International Review Engagement Practice Statements (IREPSs), International Assurance Engagement Practice Statements (IAEPSs) and International Related Services Practice Statements (IRSPSSs) are issued to serve the same purpose for implementation of ISREs, ISAEs and ISRSs respectively.
20. Professional accountants should be aware of and consider Practice Statements applicable to the engagement. A professional accountant who does not consider and apply the guidance included in a relevant Practice Statement should be prepared to explain how:
  - (a) The requirements in the ISAs; or



- (b) The basic principles and essential procedures in the IAASB's other Engagement Standard(s), addressed by the Practice Statement, have been complied with.

### **Other Papers Published by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board**

- 21. Other papers, for example Discussion Papers, are published<sup>3</sup> to promote discussion or debate on auditing, review, other assurance and related services and quality control issues affecting the accounting profession, present findings, or describe matters of interest relating to auditing, review, other assurance, related services and quality control issues affecting the accounting profession. They do not establish any basic principles or essential procedures to be followed in audit, review, other assurance or related services engagements.

### **Language**

- 22. The sole authoritative text of an exposure draft, International Standard, Practice Statement or other paper is that published by the IAASB in the English language.

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<sup>3</sup> The IAASB Chair will appoint a review group of four IAASB members to consider whether a draft paper has sufficient merit to be added to the IAASB's literature. The draft paper may come from any source and the IAASB need not have specifically commissioned it. If the review group believes that the paper has sufficient merit, it recommends to the IAASB that the paper be published and added to its literature.