

## Accountancy

Accountancy qualifications open up many opportunities in different fields of human activity. There is probably no better entry to top jobs in business and industry, management and financial consulting than working to become a highly qualified and experienced accountant.

This sheet provides a general introduction to the profession, but for more detailed information you can contact the specific professional bodies listed at the end of the sheet.

### Checklist: Why study accountancy in the United Kingdom?

- The UK has a long tradition as a trading, financial and business centre, so accountancy is one of the oldest established professions. The UK also has a reputation for educating international students to a high standard in management studies.
- Employers the world over look for an accountancy qualification for a huge range of jobs, so career prospects are excellent.
- UK qualifications are recognised all over the world.
- You can study flexibly at most levels in the profession, so whether you take a career break or work full time, you can still continue studying to complete your outstanding qualifications.
- The UK has over 100 universities and colleges specialising in accountancy, in all areas of the country. Many of them have invested heavily in developing state-of-the-art learning facilities and attracting high-quality staff.
- You can study for accountancy at any age, and you do not necessarily need a strong academic background.
- The opportunity to improve your fluency in English will improve your job prospects and help both you and your employer develop international links.



## 1 How can I prepare?

You must first determine what your existing qualifications and experience enable you to do. And secondly you should decide where your goals within the profession ambition lie.

Researching the professional bodies' websites listed in this sheet is an essential step to finding out what they all do. Look carefully at the syllabus, entry requirements, membership and examination fees. This should help you decide where your own interests can best be served. Your answers to the following questions will help you reach a decision.

- Are you keen on a work-based vocational course that will allow you to progress to a higher level, or perhaps return home better prepared for the world of accountancy?
- Do you need an access course which will serve as a foundation for more advanced study, or permit you to increase your language proficiency so that you can benefit from further study?
- Do you want a three/ four year honours degree, or a two year foundation degree, to gain both academic and practical skills?

It may be possible to take the exams for some UK accounting qualifications in your own country. Contact your local British Council office for more information or go to [www.britishcouncil.org/learning-exams.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-exams.htm)

Remember: although UK professional qualifications are widely accepted, there may not be complete compatibility between them and those in your country. You should always check this before you start. Further issues to consider are:

- international students who want to do their work experience before they go home must obtain a Training and Work Experience Scheme (TWES) permit from Work Permits (UK), a division of the Home Office. For more information, see UKCOSA's guidance note *Working during study* - [www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm](http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm)
- openings for students who want to work and study (with sponsorship for their studies) are called training vacancies. International students are advised to apply to international firms in their own countries rather than to firms in the UK
- international firms sometimes have UK training opportunities for high achievers who have been educated outside the UK and who can offer cultural knowledge and language skills useful in global business. International firms in your country should be able to tell you whether their associate offices in the UK would be interested in hearing from you.

## 2 What can I study?

In the structure of its study and training, accountancy is one of the most flexible professions to follow. For many of the qualifications you can study full time at a college or university, or part time while you work, through distance learning, and over many years between the time you register and the time you qualify. The exams are usually split into several major areas of accountancy, and each level consists of several papers in specific skills and knowledge.

### Options for study include:

- full time
- part time – in the day or evening or a combination of both, from one to three days per week
- link course – combined use of study manuals at home and periods of study at a college (introductory period, mid-course period, revision period)
- home-study manual – a manual for each subject of the syllabus, containing a built-in self-assessment system to check progress (you should use this method with some other form of study, not just on its own)
- distance learning



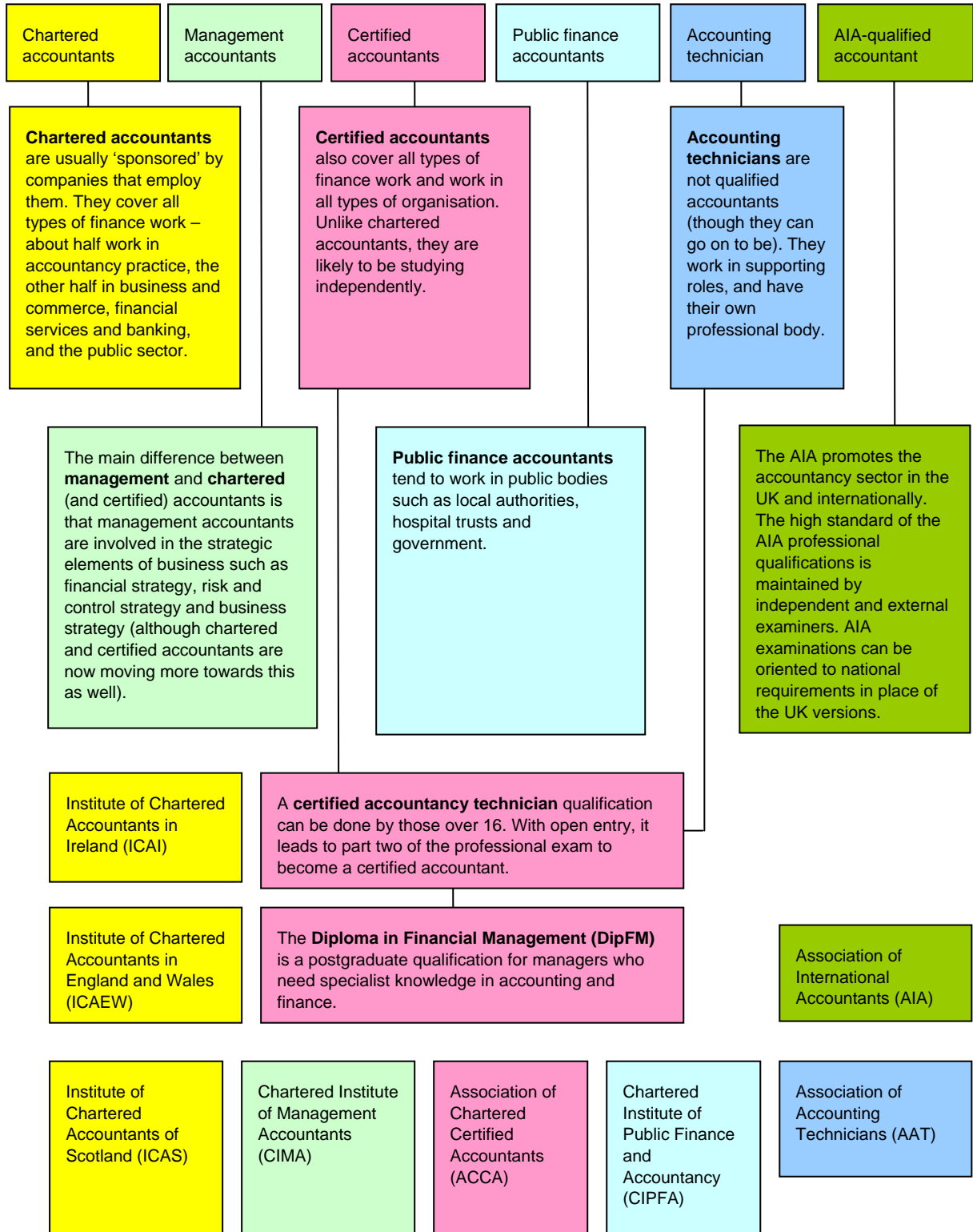
- revision course – an intensive revision course as an extra method of study, offered by public- and private-sector colleges
- sandwich or block release – blocks of full-time study combined with periods of relevant practical experience (normally sponsored by employer)
- GCP – Graduate Conversion Programme for foundation level (this option is no longer available for CIMA).

However you must bear in mind that visa restrictions for international students who are not EEA nationals limit the opportunities for paid part-time employment within the UK. Under immigration rules, immigration leave as a student can only be given in order to study full-time.

### **Are there different specialisms in accountancy?**

Yes, but there is some overlap. There are four broad areas of accountancy and six main professional bodies. You can move between them (though you may have to take extra examinations), but the simplest advice is to decide which area to go for at an early stage, so you can gain experience that will help you build your curriculum vitae.

# Types and roles of accountants





### **Why do most international students become certified rather than chartered accountants?**

The body that administers the certified qualification, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), is the biggest professional body operating internationally, with examination centres in 140 countries. This coverage makes the ACCA qualification very accessible to international students. For the chartered examination, you normally need to be sponsored by a company and it is less easy for international students to obtain sponsorship from UK companies.

## **3 Entrance**

### **Do I need a degree to become an accountant?**

In general, a degree is not essential to become an accountant, but degrees in certain subjects will earn you exemptions from one or more parts of the examinations. Contact the individual accounting bodies for details of their exemption policies.

Degree subjects that will give you exemptions include:

- accounting
- business studies/ business administration
- MBA
- economics
- mathematics
- law.

Students who do not have a relevant academic background may study for the CIMA Certificate in Business Accounting (by computer-based assessment) before starting the professional qualification. The Certificate is designed to develop broad-based business and accounting skills in preparation for the professional chartered management accounting qualification.

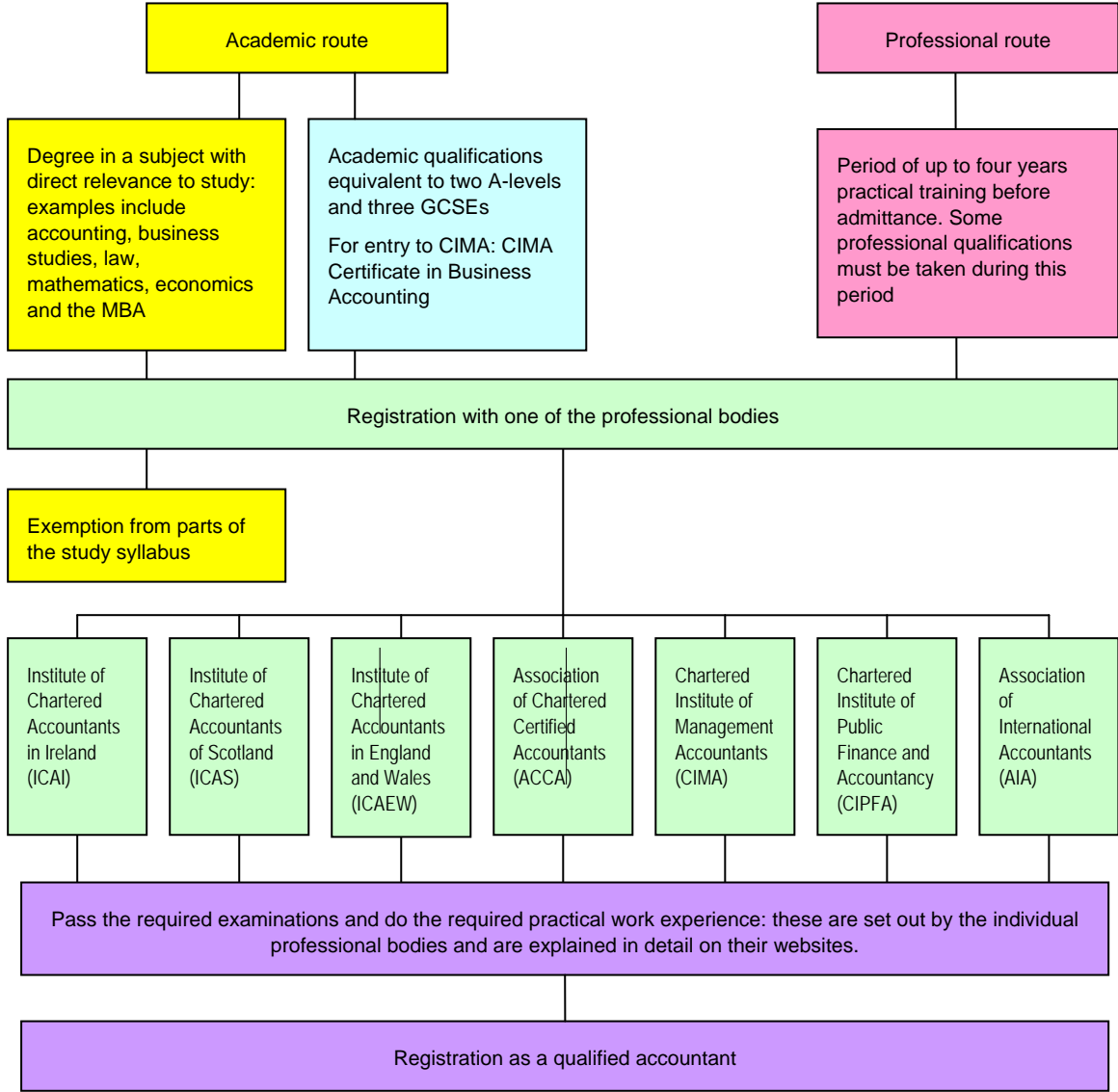
### **Can I do the entire qualification at a college or university?**

Yes. You can sit all the relevant papers – but you cannot become a member of the relevant professional body without fulfilling the work-experience requirements that all the accounting bodies have.

## **4 How can I become a professional accountant?**

You need to pass the examinations set by the professional bodies and to fulfil their practical workplace requirements. There are two main routes to qualification: the academic route and the professional route.

# Routes to qualification as an accountant in the UK





## 5 Next steps

### Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 Think about the sort of accountant you want to be. Which would give you the best prospects in your own country?
- 2 Consider the various routes to qualification. You can do a degree in accounting and finance, or in a subject (such as mathematics) that would give you exemption from some parts of the professional examinations.
- 3 Look thoroughly through the material on the professional bodies' websites.
- 4 Through international firms in your own country, investigate the possibility of a training vacancy in the UK – this would reduce your training costs.

## 6 What else do I need to know?

You should bear in mind immigration requirements when considering whether to study in the UK. Requirements vary according to your nationality or citizenship and the length of time you want to study. You will not be allowed to extend your permission to stay in the UK for more than two years on courses that are below degree level and are of less than one year's duration. The UKCOSA website will give you further information on this topic = [www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm](http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm)

Note in particular that you will not be given permission to enter the UK as a student if the school, college or university that you want to study at does not appear on the UK Department for Education and Skills Register of Education and Training Providers. You can check the register by clicking on 'Browse the Register' at [www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/)

For practical advice on living in the UK download *Studying and Living in the UK* from [www.educationuk.org/bc\\_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud\\_live\\_uk.pdf](http://www.educationuk.org/bc_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud_live_uk.pdf)



## 7 Where can I find more information

### **British Council**

Website [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)  
[www.educationuk.org/scotland](http://www.educationuk.org/scotland)

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at [www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm) which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

### **Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)**

Finnieston Square  
Glasgow G3 8DT

Telephone +44 (0) 1412 582 2000  
Fax +44 (0) 141 582 2222  
Email [students@accaglobal.com](mailto:students@accaglobal.com)  
Website [www.accaglobal.com](http://www.accaglobal.com)

### **Association of International Accountants (AIA)**

South Bank Building  
Kingsway  
Team Valley  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE11 0JS

Telephone +44 (0) 191 482 4409  
Fax +44 (0) 191 482 5578  
Email [aia@aia.org.uk](mailto:aia@aia.org.uk)  
Website [www.aia.org.uk](http://www.aia.org.uk)

### **Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)**

26 Chapter Street  
London SW1P 4NP

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7663 5441  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7663 5442  
Website [www.cimaglobal.com](http://www.cimaglobal.com)

### **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)**

3 Robert Street  
London WC2N 6RL

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7543 5600  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7543 5700  
Email [choices@cipfa.org.uk](mailto:choices@cipfa.org.uk)  
Website [www.cipfa.org.uk](http://www.cipfa.org.uk)

### **Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)**

Chartered Accountants' Hall  
PO Box 433  
London EC2P 2BJ

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7920 8100  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7920 0547  
Website [www.icaew.co.uk](http://www.icaew.co.uk)

### **Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI)**

11 Donegal Square South  
Belfast BT1 5JE

Telephone +44 (0) 28 9032 1600  
Fax +44 (0) 28 9023 0071  
Email [ca@icai.ie](mailto:ca@icai.ie)  
Website [www.icai.ie](http://www.icai.ie)

### **Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)**

CA House  
21 Haymarket Yards  
Edinburgh EH12 5BH

Telephone +44 (0) 131 347 0161  
Fax +44 (0) 131 347 0108  
Email [caeducation@icas.org.uk](mailto:caeducation@icas.org.uk)  
Website [www.icas.org.uk](http://www.icas.org.uk)

### **Work Permits (UK)**

Immigration and Nationality Directorate  
Home Office Level 5  
Moorfoot  
Sheffield S1 4PQ

Tel +44 (0) 114 259 4074  
Fax +44 (0) 114 259 3776  
Email [wpcustomers@ind.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wpcustomers@ind.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website [www.workpermits.gov.uk](http://www.workpermits.gov.uk)

## **Other useful resources**

*Inside Careers Guide to Chartered Accountants 2004* (Trotman, 2004, ISBN 1862130760) – provides a highly focused and comprehensive insight into the accountancy profession.

*While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness*

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