CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION:
COMPETENCE SELF-APPRAISAL

Circular 1/2000 on Monitored Compulsory Continuing Professional Education was issued in April 2000. In terms of this circular, all members and associates are required to sign an annual declaration that they are committed to continuing their professional education and to remain competent and relevant in the field in which they work.

Previous circulars dealing with Continuing Professional Education (CPE), linked CPE to the attendance of learning programmes. SAICA’s Board believes that mere attendance of learning programmes is not an indication that learning has taken place or that the required level of competence has been maintained.

Competence self-appraisal

In order to assist members and associates to determine whether they are maintaining their technical competence the Competence Self-Appraisal forms in the Appendices to this circular may be used. The forms can be found at [http://www.saica.co.za/library/main-cpe-backchat.htm](http://www.saica.co.za/library/main-cpe-backchat.htm)

Competence self-appraisal is a method whereby members and associates assess their own levels of knowledge and ability in those areas that are relevant to them in carrying out their professional activities. This enables them to identify those areas where their professional knowledge or ability is below an acceptable level and in respect of which corrective action needs to be taken. The Board believes that the members and associates are themselves in the best position to assess their own needs, particularly those who are involved in specialist areas.

Members and associates should first identify those areas of professional competence that are relevant to the carrying out of their professional activities. Having done this members and associates assess, as objectively as possible, their own levels of knowledge and ability in each of the relevant areas. Where competence levels are assessed to be below acceptable levels, the Board strongly urges
members and associates to take corrective action to improve their competence.

To facilitate this process this circular includes Appendices (Appendix A to Appendix F) designed to assist members and associates in the evaluation of their own competence levels. This is in response to a request from the SAICA members and associates.

Completion of the competence assessment form

It is recommended that all members and associates should complete a competence assessment form, irrespective of their fields of activity. Appendix A to Appendix F include topics that are likely to be relevant to most members and associates. The appendices should not be considered to be an exhaustive list of topics relevant to all members and associates. There are likely to be other topics that are specific to the needs of particular members or associates, which would vary according to factors such as the nature of the work carried out and the industry in which the company or client is involved. The blank forms provided as Appendix G can be used as a work-paper on which to list other topics that are of particular relevance to the member or associate concerned. [http://www.saica.co.za/library/main-cpe-backchat.htm](http://www.saica.co.za/library/main-cpe-backchat.htm)

Topics

The first column is used to list the topics. Where members and associates list additional topics that are of relevance to them, they should be specific.

The second column indicates a reference to the topic in the Statements of Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, the South African Auditing Standards or in the Income Tax Act.

Relevance to activity area

The third column of the form provides users with space to indicate the degree of relevance of each topic to their field of activity. Topics should be rated as being high, medium, low or none.
Level of competence

In the fourth column of the form, users are asked to assess their competence in the particular topic. Competence should be rated as being high, medium, low or none.
A high level of competence means that the member or associate knows the principles and the main points of the topic and is confident of being able to apply them in practice.

A medium level of competence means that the member is aware of the principles and main points of a particular topic.

A low level of competence means that the member is aware of the relevant requirements or techniques of a particular topic, and broadly what they cover.

Adequacy of competence

The fifth column of the form is used to assess whether or not the member’s level of competence is adequate. If a topic has a high relevance to the user’s field of work, he/she would normally need a high level of competence. Similarly, if a member rated a topic as of medium relevance, then his/her competence level should be at least medium.

Action

For all items in which a “no” has been recorded in the fifth column, some action will be required to improve the competence level.

Examples of actions which a member or associate may take to improve their competence are:

- Attending training courses or seminars provided by the Institute.
- Attending courses or seminars provided by other institutions.
- Reading books and journals on the relevant topics.
- Attending discussion group meetings provided by the regional associations.
- Seeking advice from colleagues.
- Researching and writing articles on the topic.
- Working on projects with other competent professionals.
If a member or associate is unsure of how to improve his/her competence in a particular area, he/she should contact the Secretariat for advice.

The Board strongly urges members and associates to take the necessary steps to attain the required levels of competence.

**Conclusion**

The Board believes that the recommendations it is making regarding CPE are in the best interests of members and associates and of the profession as a whole. I believe that if the chartered accountancy profession is to maintain its reputation for highly skilled service it is essential that members and associates should continue their education throughout their working lives.

Johannesburg I Schoole
March 2001 Executive President