
HKICPA

Guide to Membership in the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs

OCTOBER 2020



Hong Kong Institute of
Certified Public Accountants
香港會計師公會

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (the Institute) is the only statutory licensing body for professional accountants in Hong Kong.

It is responsible for the registration and regulation of certified public accountants (CPA) and for granting statutory audit rights to practising CPAs.



I. Membership admission requirements

1. A member of the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs is designated as certified public accountant (CPA).
2. To become a CPA, a candidate needs to satisfy the following requirements:
 - University degree or equivalent. This degree should be accredited or recognised by the Institute.
 - Completion of the Institute's qualification programme (QP). The QP is a post-graduate course of study including four modules of advanced study via workshops and examinations in financial reporting, corporate financing, business assurance, taxation and a final examination that tests the integration of knowledge in the four module areas.
 - At least three years of practical work experience gained under an Institute-authorized employer or supervisor.
 - Persons who wish to carry the title of CPA must demonstrate that they are of good character and are fit and proper.
 - At least 21 years of age.
3. The QP has been assessed by a number of overseas accountancy bodies as meeting their standards of admission to membership. QP qualified members of the Institute are eligible for exemption from the professional programme and practical experience requirements of the following institutes:

- ▶ Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ)[^]
- ▶ Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI)[^]
- ▶ Chartered Professional Accountants Canada (CPA Canada)^{*}
- ▶ Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW)[#]
- ▶ Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)[^]
- ▶ Institute of Chartered Accountants of Zimbabwe (ICAZ)
- ▶ South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)[^]
- ▶ NASBA/AICPA IQAB[♦]
- ▶ CPA Australia (CPAA)[~]
- ▶ The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)[~]

[^] Members of the Institute who qualified through the QP under the mutual examination paper exemptions agreement for Mainland and Hong Kong accountants (i.e. have passed module D/ module 14 and final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP) are eligible for consideration of membership admission to CA ANZ, CAI, ICAS and SAICA under the reciprocal membership agreements.

[#] Members of the Institute who qualified through the QP under the mutual examination paper exemptions agreement for Mainland and Hong Kong accountants (i.e. have passed the PRC CPA Uniform Examination and modules A/ 11 and D/ 14 and final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP) are eligible for consideration of membership admission to ICAEW under the reciprocal membership agreement.

[♦] Under the mutual recognition agreement with the U.S. International Qualifications Appraisal Board representing NASBA and AICPA, (i) members who have passed the Institute's QP in full and were admitted to the Institute on or before 31 December 2020 with 2-3 years of post-qualifying experience and (ii) degree-holding members who were admitted to the Institute on or before 31 December 2001 with 2-3 years of post-qualifying accounting experience are eligible to apply to a U.S. State Board of Accountancy for a U.S. CPA license upon passing the U.S. International Qualification Examination.

^{*} CPA Canada requires new members to complete Continuing Professional Development on Canadian tax and law within 2 years of being granted membership.

[~] Applicable to members completing the QP in Hong Kong only.

4. (a) All CPAs who were admitted to the Institute on or before 29 July 2008 and graduates of the Institute's QP can enjoy exemption for four out of seven papers of the PRC CPA Uniform Examination of the Chinese Institute of CPAs (CICPA).
- (b) All CPAs are exempted from all except two papers of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) Professional Qualification programme. CPAs who have completed the Institute's Financial Controllership Programme can enjoy exemption from one more paper.
5. To apply for registration as a CPA, please complete and submit to the Institute form R-3, which can be downloaded from the Institute's website at <http://www.hkicpa.org.hk>.

II. Overseas qualifications recognition agreements

6. As the gatekeeper of Hong Kong's accounting profession, the Institute endeavours to accommodate overseas accounting body members who wish to join the Institute and enjoy the rights and privileges of membership.
7. One of the Institute's main duties is to develop the accounting profession in Hong Kong. To that end, it has introduced an independent qualification assessment framework to review overseas qualifications, making sure that admission to the Institute's membership of overseas qualified members is based on equivalent competency standards set by the Institute's QP. Based on this third-party assessment, the Institute has signed recognition agreements with accountancy bodies around

the world. These agreements stipulate that members of overseas accountancy bodies who have sat and passed the professional examinations of such bodies are eligible for full or partial exemption from the Institute's QP, depending on certain parameters and criteria agreed between the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs and the overseas bodies. All such applicants are required to be current members in good standing of the relevant body and meet the Institute's standard membership requirement of being of good character and fit and proper to become a CPA.

8. Persons who wish to join the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs must provide proof of qualification with an overseas institute.
9. The Institute has entered into agreements with 12 overseas accounting bodies with different recognition requirements:

Reciprocal membership agreement (RMA)

Based on the reciprocal membership agreement, the Institute recognises both the professional examinations and practical experience training of the other body in full.

Members of counterpart accounting bodies listed below are eligible for full exemption from the Institute's QP, aptitude tests and practical experience training.

- Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ)
- Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI)
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW)
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)
- South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)
- Chartered Professional Accountants Canada (CPA Canada) ^{Note 1}
- NASBA/AICPA IQAB ^{Note 2}

Note 1 – CPA Canada members who qualified through the legacy CGA or CMA program must possess two years of relevant post-qualifying experience certified by their provincial/ regional CPA body.

Note 2 – The agreement was signed with the U.S. International Qualifications Appraisal Board (IQAB) representing the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) and the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA).

Members of the accounting body listed below are, however, required to sit and pass the Institute's aptitude tests on Hong Kong law and taxation.

- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Zimbabwe (ICAZ)

Prerequisite(s) for U.S. CPAs to become Institute members:

- i. Hold a baccalaureate degree recognized by a U.S. State Board of Accountancy, excluding a degree obtained in Hong Kong, Macau or Mainland China unless the applicant is a U.S. citizen, visa holder or lawful permanent resident. If the applicant is not a U.S. citizen, visa holder or lawful permanent resident and has obtained his/ her baccalaureate degree in Hong Kong, Macau or Mainland China, the applicant is required to pass the final examination or capstone of the Institute's QP. As a transitional arrangement, the applicant is deemed to have satisfied the degree requirement and does not need to pass the final examination/ capstone if he/ she had passed the U.S. Uniform CPA Examination by 30 June 2005.
- ii. Pass the U.S. Uniform CPA Examination.
- iii. Have at least three years of relevant accounting experience recognized by the Institute. Generally, the Institute recognizes, subject to vetting, U.S.-based accounting experience which meets the requirements of the relevant U.S. State Board of Accountancy and experience gained under an Institute-authorized employer or supervisor.

Mutual recognition agreement (MRA)

Based on the mutual recognition agreement, the Institute grants exemptions to a large part of the Institute's QP to members of the corresponding accounting body. Members of these bodies still need to take the non-exempt part(s) of the Institute's examinations and meet practical work experience requirements of the Institute.

The Hong Kong Institute of CPAs has MRAs with:

- CPA Australia (CPAA) for its Australia and Hong Kong qualified members
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) for its U.K. and Hong Kong qualified members

Prerequisite(s) for CPA Australia members to become a CPA:

- Hold an accredited or recognised degree from an Australian university
- Pass the CPA Australia CPA Program in Australia or Hong Kong, including all six compulsory core subjects and mandatory subjects (including financial reporting & disclosure / financial reporting, financial risk management, and assurance services & auditing / advanced audit and assurance) required by the agreement
- Pass the final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP
- If the applicant passed the final examination of the Institute's QP, complete and pass the workshops of any one of the four modules of the current QP
- If the applicant passed the capstone of the Institute's new QP, pass the Institute's aptitude test on Hong Kong taxation
- Obtain at least three years of practical work experience under an Institute-authorized employer or supervisor

These terms are part of an MRA signed on 1 July 2020 and are in force until 30 June 2025. The terms apply to members of CPAA registered as associate members (students) of CPAA in Australia or Hong Kong on or after 16 August 2004.

Transitional arrangement under old MRA:

Members of CPA Australia who were registered on or before 15 August 2004 and completed the CPAA programme by 30 June 2007 are covered by the transitional arrangement of the former agreement signed in 2000 and are eligible for full exemption from the Institute's QP and aptitude tests.

Members of ACCA need to satisfy the following criteria:

- Hold a university degree accredited or recognised by the Institute
- Pass the ACCA professional examination in Hong Kong or the U.K., which must include the two specified papers including audit and assurance services. Applicants who have been exempted from the corporate and business law and/ or any of the two specified paper of the ACCA professional examination will be assessed by the Institute on a case by case basis
- Pass the final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP
- If the applicant passed the final examination of the Institute's current QP, complete and pass the workshops of any one of the four modules of the current QP
- Obtain at least three years of accounting-related work experience under an Institute-authorized employer or supervisor
- Have qualified in Hong Kong or the U.K. (which are jurisdictions covered by the independent assessment)

The agreement covers students who enrolled in ACCA on or after 16 August 2004. It is in force until 30 June 2025.

Transitional arrangements under old MRA:

Members of ACCA who were registered as students of ACCA on or before 15 August 2004 and completed the ACCA professional examinations by specified deadlines are covered by the transitional arrangements of the old MRA and are eligible for full exemption from the QP and aptitude tests.

Mutual examination paper exemptions (MEPE)

Based on mutual examination paper exemptions, the Institute grants exemptions to certain agreement papers of the Institute's QP to members of the corresponding accounting body. Members of these bodies still need to take the non-exempt part(s) of the Institute's QP and satisfy the practical experience requirements of the Institute.

MEPE arrangements are in operation for:

- Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CICPA)
- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)

Prerequisite(s) to become a CPA under MEPE:

- University education
- Modules not under exemption
- Final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP
- Meet the Institute's practical work experience requirements

Members of CICPA need to satisfy the following criteria:

- Hold a university degree accredited or recognised by the Institute

- For members admitted to CICPA on or after 30 July 2008: pass the PRC CPA Uniform Examination of the CICPA
- Complete and pass module D/ module 14 (taxation) of the Institute's QP (i.e., exemption from modules A, B and C of the current QP/ all modules except module 14 of the new QP)
- Pass the final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP
- Meet the Institute's practical work experience requirements

Members of CIMA need to satisfy the following criteria:

- Hold a university degree accredited or recognised by the Institute
- Pass the CIMA Professional Qualification programme
- Complete and pass module C/ module 13 (Business Assurance) and module D/ module 14 (Taxation) of the Institute's QP
- Pass the final examination/ capstone of the Institute's QP
- Pass the Institute's aptitude test on Hong Kong law
- Obtain at least three years of accounting-related work experience under an Institute-authorized employer or supervisor

NB Please refer to the "Recognition of overseas bodies" section in our website at: www.hkicpa.org.hk/en/become-a-hkicpa/recognition-of-overseas-bodies/ for details of the conditions under each recognition agreement with the overseas accountancy bodies.

Practical experience

10. All membership applicants must acquire at least three years of relevant practical experience in accountancy in Hong Kong or a recognised jurisdiction. The practical experience acquired by members of the recognised bodies on or after 1 July 2005 must have been obtained under an authorized employer or supervisor complying with the Institute's practical experience requirements.
11. Members of CA ANZ, CAI, CPA Canada, ICAEW, ICAS, ICAZ, and SAICA who have completed the practical experience training programme of their parent institutes are deemed to have satisfied the Institute's practical experience requirements.

III. Practising certificate

12. A CPA who wishes to sign statutory audit reports must apply to the Institute for a practising certificate. The applicant needs to meet additional requirements, including ordinarily resident in Hong Kong, practising certificate examinations, auditing experience, continuing professional development, and non-bankruptcy requirements, etc.

Practising certificate requirements

13. CPAs may apply for a practising certificate, issued annually on application, if they have had a period of not less than four years of full-time approved accounting experience of which at least one year is post-qualifying (i.e., acquired after registration as a CPA with the Institute or after becoming a member of an accountancy body recognised by the Institute). The four-year period may be reduced to 30 months if the experience acquired is all post-qualifying. In either case, a substantial proportion (75%) of the accounting experience must be in auditing and at least one year of such experience must be gained in Hong Kong within three years prior to the date of application.
14. Approved accounting experience means experience gained in the office of:
 - A CPA holding a valid practising certificate issued by the Institute and practising public accountancy; or
 - A person practising public accountancy in the jurisdiction of an accountancy body accepted by the Institute

15. In addition, applicants shall satisfy the council that:
 - They are ordinarily resident in Hong Kong
 - They have passed the examinations prescribed by the Institute including audit, local law and practice
16. A person holding a practising certificate may describe herself or himself as a CPA (practising) and practise public accountancy in Hong Kong.
17. To perform audit engagements of public interest entities (PIE), a practising certificate holder needs to register with the Institute as a PIE auditor.

IV. Enquiries

18. For enquiries, please contact the Institute's membership and admission department on telephone number 2287 7228 or email to admission@hki CPA.org.hk.

Note: The information in this booklet is for general guidance only. Please refer from time to time to the Institute's website www.hki CPA.org.hk for the latest information on registration matters.

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