

5.2 Practical experience process

QP students are required to attain relevant practical experience under the supervision of AE/ AS for a minimum of three years. It is essential for QP students to provide useful information (e.g. the types and duration of work experience) to demonstrate their achievement of the professional competences and facilitate their Counselors/ AS to perform the review and assessment on the basis of complete and accurate records.

It is also important for AE/ AS and QP students to have regular communication on learning and development related issues so as to ensure that the QP students' training is moving in the right direction.

After reading this section, you will learn how QP students can acquire recognized practical experience through the following six stages:

- **Stage 1:** Getting started – Find an eligible AE/ AS
- **Stage 2:** Enter into a Development Commitment with AE/ AS
- **Stage 3:** Create Training Records and record practical experience
- **Stage 4:** Attend interim and review meetings
- **Stage 5:** Complete Training Records
- **Stage 6:** Perform final sign-off on the Training Records

QP students can go through all six stages and comply with the relevant requirements under supervision of the same AE/ AS during the whole period of experience. In case the QP students wish to pursue their careers in a new company or work for new managers/ supervisors, they may have to look for new Counselors/ AS and go through the above six stages again.

5.2.1 Getting started – Find an eligible Counselor/ AS (Stage 1)

To attain recognized practical experience, QP students must be trained under the supervision of Counselors/ AS. Here are some useful tips for QP students to get started:

- **Search the Lists of Authorized Employers and Authorized Supervisors**

QP students should check whether their employer is an AE or whether there is any AS in their organization. A list of Authorized Employers and Authorized Supervisors is available on our website for public search.

- **Contact the MIC/ Scheme Coordinator/ AS**

QP students should inform the MIC/ MIC Deputies/ Scheme Coordinator/ AS of their supervision needs from the Counselor/ AS. The AE/ AS can then assign appropriate resources to QP students.

- **Contact the HR personnel/ direct manager or supervisor**

For QP students who are not working for an AE/ AS, they may check with relevant parties to explore whether their employer/ supervisor can apply to register as an AE/ AS.

The Counselor/ AS is not necessarily the direct supervisor of the QP student, but must have access to the direct manager and the work undertaken by the QP student to ensure compliance with the practical experience requirements. The Counselor/ AS may come from the subsidiaries of the QP student's employing organization provided that the group registration application is approved by the Institute.

5.2.2 Enter into a Development Commitment with AE/ AS (Stage 2)

Once an eligible Counselor/ AS has been identified, the QP student should start his/ her practical experience training as soon as practicable. Within three months of commencement of the Practical Experience Period, the QP student should initiate to create a new Development Commitment through the Practical Experience Online System for the AE/ AS to review and sign.

The Development Commitment is designed to nurture a constructive discussion and relationship between AE/ AS and QP student and ensure that both parties have a clear understanding of the expectations and responsibilities on practical experience training. A standard Development Commitment should include the following:

- Name of the AE/ AS, the MIC and the QP student;
- Date of commencement and terms of the Development Commitment;
- Responsibilities of the AE/ AS;
- Responsibilities of the QP student;
- Conditions for termination of the Development Commitment; and
- Signatures of the AE/ AS, the QP student and dates.

The Development Commitment should be signed online by both the AE/ AS and the QP student within three months upon commencement of the Practical Experience Period. All tailor-made terms in the Development Commitment have to be in compliance with the Codes and Guidelines and is subject to review and approval by the Institute. A sample of the Development Commitment is set out in **Appendix C** for illustration purpose.

Failure to sign and submit the Development Commitment online implies that the practical experience acquired by the QP student may not be recognized, and the QP student's admission to HKICPA membership will be delayed.

Once the Development Commitment is approved, the QP student can create his/ her Training Records for recording the recognized practical experience.

Should the Development Commitment be terminated for any reasons (Refer to **Section 2.2.3**), the QP student should submit the completed Training Records for AE/ AS to sign off and endorse (Refer to **Section 5.2.6**), and the QP student is required to inform the Institute immediately. In addition, whenever the QP student resumes practical experience training, he/ she should enter into a Development Commitment with the new AE/ AS.

5.2.3 Create Training Records and record practical experience (Stage 3)

Having entered into the Development Commitment with the AE/ AS, QP students can create Training Records to record evidence of practical experience and skills and have these record verified by their AE/ AS. The Training Records include:

- The QP student's personal particulars;
- Record of the time input;
- Record of the relevant practical experience competence output; and
- Reflective Statement (Refer to **Section 5.2.5**).

QP students are advised to devise a good plan to achieve the professional competences and skills. Here are some easy-to-follow suggestions:

- **Be familiar with the pre-defined elements of professional competences**

QP students should learn how their work can fit into the pre-defined elements and how they can achieve competences at the required level of proficiency. QP students should consult their Counselors/ AS for any uncertainties.

- **Record practical experience on a timely basis**

QP students can easily keep a complete set of Training Records if they can update their time input and competence output on the Practical Experience Online System periodically. Meanwhile, QP students can plan ahead whenever there is a need to catch up the training progress.

- **Maintain proper documentation as supporting evidence**

This will definitely help Counselors/ AS to evaluate whether the professional competences acquired by QP students have been successfully achieved during the review meetings.

A sample of the Training Records is attached in **Appendix D** for illustration purpose.

5.2.4 Attend interim and annual review meetings (Stage 4)

Regular communication is crucial to the quality of practical experience training. Interim and annual review meetings should be conducted for each training year.

The interim review can take place any time throughout the training year. The Counselors/ AS should evaluate QP students' training progress while QP students' work performance and achievement of competences are still fresh in mind. No detailed documentation is required except putting down the review date on the online Training Records.

The annual review meeting has to be conducted so that QP students' training progress is properly reviewed and monitored. The Counselors/ AS should perform sign-off on the Training Records at least on an annual basis. See **Section 5.2.5** for more information about the annual sign-off.

At the review meetings, Counselors/ AS and QP students may discuss the following:

- Time spent on practical experience;
- Progress in achieving competences required for HKICPA membership;
- Reflective Statements;
- Professional development;
- Ethical issues and training;
- Career development;
- Any other issues affecting QP students' ability to satisfy the requirements of becoming a professional accountant (e.g. modules and study progress).

5.2.5 Complete Training Records and Reflective Statement (Stage 5)

Why is the Reflective Statement required?

It is essential for the Counselors/ AS to have an overall understanding and evaluation of QP students' achievement of professional competences before signing off the Training Records. In this regard, QP students should not only record the duration (i.e. time input) and type (i.e. competence output) of professional competences achieved throughout the training year, but also write down their self-reflective feedback in the Reflective Statement which forms part of the Training Records.

The objective of writing Reflective Statement is to encourage QP students to take ownership for their personal development and engage in self-improvement on a regular basis. This provides opportunities for QP students to give more specific examples illustrating how they demonstrated their achievement of professional competences and how they are going to turn their training needs into future development actions.

The self-reflective section includes the following:

- Main areas of work and activities undertaken during the Practical Experience Period;
- An evaluation of the particular skills developed with reference to the competence(s) achieved during the Practical Experience Period; and
- An identification of the improvement areas or further development needs for the forthcoming year and plans to achieve them (e.g. elements of competence(s) planned to develop and demonstrate).

The Reflective Statement completed by QP students should be reviewed and discussed with the Counselors/ AS at least on an annual basis (e.g. at the annual review meeting). The Counselors/ AS can then evaluate the QP students' competences development and performance against the targets set, advise on future experience and development needs and provide constructive feedback.

When should the Counselors/ AS perform the sign-off?

The Training Records should be reviewed and signed off under the following situations:

- **At least on an annual basis**

The Training Records should be signed off by 31 December each year and submitted online within one month of the cut-off date (i.e. 31 January of the following year).

- **When the QP student ceases to be trained by the current Counselor/ AS**

This may arise when (1) the Counselor/ AS/ QP student is going to work for a new company; (2) the QP student is going to work under the supervision of a new Counselor; or (3) the QP student has completed all practical experience requirements.

If the online Training Records have not been properly signed off, there may be a risk that the practical experience acquired by the QP student would not be recognized for HKICPA membership admission or the QP student would not be able to commence the practical experience training in his/ her new employment or position.

Failure to conduct an annual sign-off on the Training Records without reasonable causes may trigger follow-up actions by the Institute (e.g. phone enquiry or on-site visit). In the worst case scenario, it may result in the removal of the AE/ AS authorization status and/ or rejection of the QP students' membership application.

What can you do if you have doubts on the contents of the Practical Experience Training Records?

If more information has to be obtained before sign-off, the Counselor/ AS may contact the QP student concerned or any relevant parties for further details or clarification. In case amendment is required for the training record information completed by the QP student, the Counselor/ AS should request the QP student to make the changes and explain why the changes are appropriate or necessary.

5.2.6 Perform final sign-off on the Practical Experience Training Records (Stage 6)

To satisfy the time and competence requirements, QP students have to go through Stages 1 to 6 throughout the practical experience process as outlined under **Section 5.2**.

At the completion of the Practical Experience Period or when the Development Commitment is terminated for any reasons, QP students should submit the signed off Training Records for final sign-off (i.e. the MIC/ MIC Deputies/ AS's endorsement) to confirm the QP students' attained competences and their employment period.

In case of termination of the Development Commitment, the Training Records should be endorsed by the MIC/ MIC Deputies/ AS within three months of the end date of the Practical Experience Period.