

# AUDIT PRACTICE BULLETIN NO. 1 OF 2026

## STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE: CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION COMPLIANCE INSIGHTS

30 MARCH 2026

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) represents a cornerstone of professional excellence for public accountants, reflecting their shared commitment to deliver high quality services to their clients and the public. As the accounting landscape continues to evolve with new standards, technologies and market demands, CPE ensures that public accountants remain at the forefront of their field, equipped with current knowledge and enhanced skills that benefits both their professional development and the broader financial ecosystem.
- 2 To support this professional growth, public accountants are required to complete CPE in accordance with the [CPE syllabus](#) approved by the Public Accountants Oversight Committee (PAOC). The framework is designed to be both comprehensive and flexible, requiring public accountants to maintain at least 120 CPE hours in each rolling 3-year period<sup>1</sup>. This includes a minimum of 90 hours through structured learning across the 3-year cycle, with at least 20 hours of structured learning completed in each calendar year. Public accountants are expected to maintain detailed records of their CPE activities and to provide them to ACRA for verification during compliance checks, when requested.
- 3 The CPE syllabus encompasses five core expertise areas that reflect the core competencies expected of today's public accountants:
  - (i) Financial and Sustainability Reporting Standards and Pronouncements (Category 1);
  - (ii) Ethics and Professionalism (Category 2);
  - (iii) Auditing and Assurance Standards, Pronouncements and Methodology (Category 3)<sup>2</sup>;
  - (iv) Insolvency and Restructuring (Category 4)<sup>3</sup>;
  - (v) Information Technology (Category 5).
- 4 Given the increase in online platforms offering short online courses, PAOC has reduced the minimum CPE programme duration from 1 CPE hour to 0.5 CPE

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<sup>1</sup> A rolling 3-year period comprises 3 CPE Reporting Years. A CPE Reporting Year is a period of 12 months commencing on 1 January of each year and ending on 31 December of each year. For the purpose of renewal, the relevant rolling 3-year period comprises the 3 CPE Reporting Years immediately preceding the year of renewal, e.g. for the 2025 PA renewal (for which the 2025 CPE check was conducted), the relevant rolling 3-year period will be from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Public accountants who are registered only for the purpose of becoming judicial managers and do not perform audits are not required to obtain a minimum number of CPE hours in Category 3.

<sup>3</sup> Applicable only for public accountants who are also approved liquidators and/or public accountants who are registered only for the purpose of becoming judicial managers and do not perform audits.

hour to allow public accountants to earn 0.5 CPE hours for completing courses lasting between 30 minutes to 1 hour since 1 April 2025. This is to provide public accountants with greater flexibility to attend bite-sized learning modules or courses as part of their continuous professional learning. For courses that are delivered over multiple 30-minute modules to achieve an overall learning objective, CPE hours will only be awarded and recorded after public accountants have completed all relevant modules. To strike a balance between providing flexibility for busy professionals to engage in bite-sized learning and ensuring that public accountants also participate in comprehensive learning programmes, bite-size courses are capped at 45 CPE hours (50% of the total 90 structured CPE hours required) in each rolling 3-year period<sup>4</sup>.

- 5 To ensure the integrity of the CPE system whilst supporting public accountants in meeting their obligations, ACRA collaborates with ISCA to conduct compliance reviews. These reviews examine selected public accountants' adherence to CPE requirements against their declarations for the relevant rolling 3-year period.

## **KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE 2025 CPE COMPLIANCE CHECK**

- 6 ACRA's 2025 CPE compliance review demonstrates that the majority of public accountants continue to successfully meet their professional development obligations, reflecting the profession's commitment to ongoing learning. Despite these positive results, the review identified specific instances of non-compliance with CPE requirements and areas that warrant attention for improvement. The following key observations and practical guidance from the review aim to support public accountants to effectively meet their continuing education requirements.

### **Shortfall in CPE hours for specific core expertise area**

- 7 Category 4 (Insolvency and Restructuring). This category applies to public accountants who are also approved liquidators. To maintain current competencies in this specialised area, public accountants must complete at least 9 hours of structured learning in Category 4 over each rolling 3-year period.

Public accountants who no longer intend to perform liquidation work may apply to revoke their liquidator license, which would absolve them from the Category 4 CPE requirement. Those who choose to remain as approved liquidators are obligated to fulfil this CPE requirement to ensure they maintain the specialised knowledge necessary for insolvency practice.

- 8 Category 5 (Information Technology). Category 5 was introduced as a core expertise area from 1 January 2022, reflecting the profession's evolution towards technology-enhanced practice. As digital tools increasingly transform how audits are conducted and how insights are delivered to clients, this category supports public accountants in developing the technological competencies that enhance both audit quality and professional effectiveness.

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<sup>4</sup> Please refer to [Practice Direction No. 1 of 2025](#) for more details.

To fulfil Category 5 requirements, public accountants can explore a diverse range of courses including Robotic Process Automation, Data Analytics, Data Interpretation and Visualisation, Business Analytics and Reporting, Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence<sup>5</sup>. These learning opportunities not only satisfy CPE obligations but also equip public accountants with valuable skills that can differentiate their service offerings in an increasingly digital business environment.

### **Inaccurate classification of courses**

- 9 Our 2025 CPE compliance review identified some instances where sustainability reporting courses were classified under Category 3, instead of Category 1. Since 1 January 2023, courses undertaken by public accountants in the areas of sustainability reporting standards and related assurance can be regarded as core expertise areas under “Financial and Sustainability Reporting Standards and Pronouncements” (Category 1) and “Auditing and Assurance Standards, Pronouncements and Methodology” (Category 3) of the CPE syllabus respectively<sup>6</sup>.
- 10 To ensure accurate classification, public accountants may find it helpful to verify course categories with course providers.

### **Poor maintenance of CPE records**

- 11 Under paragraph 3 of the Third Schedule to the Accountants (Public Accountants) Rules, public accountants are required to maintain proper records to support their CPE declaration and provide evidence of participation when requested by ACRA. During the 2025 CPE compliance check, some public accountants experienced challenges with the accurate tracking of their CPE hours, highlighting the importance of systematic record-keeping.
- 12 Complete records should include the name and registration number of the public accountant, name of the course provider, course title and content description, completion date, relevant CPE category and the number of CPE hours awarded. The [CPE logbook template](#) available on the ACRA website can serve as a practical tool for maintaining these records systematically.

### **Lack of evidence of participation and false declarations**

- 13 Course participation documents<sup>7</sup> must provide objective evidence that the public accountant attended or completed the learning activity and should be retained for a period of 3 years (excluding the current year). Courses and learning activities without verifiable evidence of completion from the course providers cannot be regarded as structured CPE hours.

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<sup>5</sup> Please refer to [Practice Direction No. 1 of 2021](#) for more details.

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to [Practice Direction No. 3 of 2022](#) for more details.

<sup>7</sup> These can be (i) certificate of participation from course providers (ii) email confirmation by course provider or (iii) screenshots taken during webcast participation (with the outline, date and time/duration), among others. Such documentation should demonstrate clear proof of attendance or completion.

- 14 The 2025 CPE compliance review identified instances where public accountants could not provide evidence of attendance for declared CPE courses. In one notable instance, the public accountant declared online courses that were not attempted or completed. Similarly, the 2023 review found declarations for courses that could not be verified or did not exist.
- 15 Where such serious discrepancies have been identified, ACRA will take appropriate regulatory actions, including initiating disciplinary proceedings and cancelling a public accountant's registration.
- 16 Following the 2025 compliance review, the PAOC considered individual circumstances and, in cases of CPE shortfalls, has permitted public accountants to make good the deficiencies within specified timeframes. Disciplinary action has also been initiated against public accountants who provided misleading information in their renewal applications.
- 17 CPE compliance should be taken seriously. Recent global instances of professionals inappropriately using technology to complete training and the related assessments underscore the enduring importance of honest participation and genuine learning in all CPE activities.
- 18 Public accountants must also uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct by diligently complying with CPE requirements and maintaining comprehensive records of their professional development activities. These records should be readily available for verification during compliance reviews.
- 19 ACRA is committed to supporting public accountants in meeting their CPE obligations but will not hesitate to take decisive action against instances of serious non-compliance or misrepresentation to preserve the integrity of the profession.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

- 20 Continuing professional education remains fundamental to maintaining the high standards that define the public accounting profession. Public accountants are encouraged to stay current with the CPE syllabus requirements across all applicable categories, and to select CPE courses with clear learning objectives that directly enhance technical knowledge and professional skills relevant to public accountancy services. Given the increasing prominence of sustainability reporting and rapid proliferation of technology and artificial intelligence in today's business environment, courses in these domains offer valuable opportunities to develop expertise that enhances professional capabilities and future-proof skillsets. Public accountants are encouraged to proactively seek out relevant and forward-looking CPE courses, ensuring their knowledge remains current and aligned with emerging trends.