The AICPA® Foundational Competencies Framework for Aspiring CPAs

Educators and accounting professionals developed the framework to define a set of skills-based competencies students entering the accounting profession need, regardless of their chosen career path (public, industry, government or not-for-profit), or for the specific accounting services they’ll eventually perform. Because of the rapidly changing accounting profession, the framework focuses on critical skills instead of traditional subject-content areas or accounting services. Although knowledge requirements will change with time, the foundational competencies the framework identifies will have long-term value and will support a variety of career opportunities for future CPAs.

The competencies are arranged under the following three pillars:

**Technical competencies**
Competencies specific to the accounting profession that add value to business and contribute to a prosperous society

**Organizational competencies**
Broad, cross-disciplinary integration competencies that relate to the environment in which accounting professionals work

**Leadership competencies**
Skills, attitudes and behaviors of accounting professionals

How this guide can help you

**Faculty**
Incorporate these competencies into your curriculum to prepare your students for a career as a CPA. Find additional resources using the QR code below.

**Students**
Acquire the areas of knowledge through your accounting coursework that will prepare you for the accounting profession.

**Employers**
Gain insight into how we’re preparing the next generation of accounting professionals based on your feedback.

Please see the other side for details about these three pillars.
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Technical competencies

Risk assessment, analysis and management
• Assess risks by applying professional skepticism and using appropriate risk-assessment frameworks.
• Describe necessary controls to mitigate risks.
• Evaluate controls to verify effectiveness.
• Develop potential response plans to mitigate losses, including reassessing controls.

Analysis and decision-making
• Identify relevant and reliable financial and nonfinancial data to analyze.
• Analyze information, including statements, tax returns and other relevant data.
• Make strategic decisions by applying professional judgment to analyses.

Measurement and reporting
• Identify relevant information to measure.
• Measure relevant data for financial, taxation, compliance and other reporting needs.
• Report appropriate content as required by professional standards, law, industry standards and voluntary reporting initiatives.
• Communicate reports clearly and objectively to intended audiences.

Research
• Identify research question(s).
• Conduct research using primary sources, authoritative literature, standards, laws and organization-specific practices.
• Use research findings to make informed decisions.
• Communicate research-based decisions to stakeholders.
• Evaluate research-based decisions for effectiveness.

Technology, systems and process management
• Compare technological tools to recommend best option(s) given time and cost constraints and job specifications.
• Leverage relevant technologies to facilitate data analyses that supports organizational goals.
• Evaluate frameworks to design systems of controls that facilitate efficient and effective operations.
• Design systems to perform processes for reliable and verifiable analyses and reporting.

Organizational competencies

Strategic management
• Identify risks and opportunities arising from industry and global environments.
• Explain organizations’ strategic management processes.
• Identify information requirements for organizational strategies, goals and objectives.
• Provide strategic insights for managers and other organizational stakeholders.

Performance management
• Coordinate with stakeholders to identify key performance indicators and measures to evaluate success.
• Identify sources of data for performance analysis and consider alternative measures.
• Evaluate the impact of decisions on planning and managing performance.

Resource management
• Assess organizational resource management practices.
• Explain the impact of trends, emerging issues, technologies and the legal environment on resource management.
• Collaborate with organizational stakeholders to improve resource management, including implementation of effective controls.

Environment, social and governance management
• Evaluate the impact of organizational activities on the environment, society and governance.
• Explain the effect legal and regulatory global environments have on organizations.
• Describe how operating units prioritize environmental, societal and governance initiatives into operational plans.
• Explain the relevant reporting frameworks for environmental, societal and governance initiatives.
• Identify information system requirements to evaluate strategies to enhance environmental, societal and governance practices.
• Leverage relevant technologies to facilitate data analyses that support diversity, equity and inclusion.

Leadership competencies

Ethical behavior
• Adhere to the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct and other professional codes of ethics.
• Demonstrate unwavering ethical business practices.
• Explain the importance of ethical principles for the protection of society.

Critical thinking
• Accurately articulate organizational issues/problems/questions.
• Evaluate available quantitative and qualitative data relevant to issues/problems/questions.
• Apply a critical thinking framework to the decision-making process.
• Evaluate alternative answers/decisions to issues/problems/questions.
• State informed decisions supported by critical thinking processes.

Collaboration
• Engage with diverse stakeholders who have common objectives to reach innovative outcomes.
• Serve as both a leader and follower as appropriate for specific circumstances, including working with diverse global teams.
• Constructively negotiate an acceptable agreement between two or more parties.
• Promote diversity, equity and inclusion in collaborative organizational activities.

Self-management
• Maintain self-awareness to be cognizant of how your behaviors impact others.
• Develop social awareness to respond to the needs of others.
• Build relationships to achieve common goals.

Communication
• Practice active listening to verify understanding of information provided.
• Adapt communication to specific audiences.
• Communicate clearly using accounting terminology and plain language as appropriate.