

**ISA 300 (Redrafted)**  
**PLANNING AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
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## **Introduction**

### **Scope of this ISA**

1. This International Standard on Auditing (ISA) deals with planning an audit of financial statements. This ISA is framed in the context of recurring audits but also applies to initial audit engagements.

### **Effective Date**

2. This ISA is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after December 15, 200x.

### **Objective to be Achieved**

3. In relation to the subject matter of this ISA, the objective of the auditor is to plan the audit so that it will be performed in an effective manner.

## **Requirements**

### **Involvement of Key Engagement Team Members**

4. The engagement partner and other key members of the engagement team shall be involved in planning the audit. (Ref: Para A1)

### **Preliminary Engagement Activities**

5. The auditor shall perform the following activities at the beginning of the current audit engagement:
  - (a) Performing procedures required by ISA 220, “Quality Control for Audits of Historical Financial Information,” regarding the continuance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement.
  - (b) Evaluating compliance with ethical requirements, including independence, as required by ISA 220.
  - (c) Establishing an understanding of the terms of the engagement, as required by ISA 210, “Terms of Audit Engagements.” (Ref: Para A2-A3)

Performing these activities at the beginning of the audit assists the auditor in identifying and evaluating events or circumstances that may adversely affect the audit, before any significant audit work is undertaken.

### **Planning Activities**

#### **THE OVERALL AUDIT STRATEGY AND AUDIT PLAN**

6. The auditor shall establish the overall audit strategy for the audit. (Ref: Para A4-A6)
7. In establishing the overall audit strategy, the auditor shall:
  - (a) Determine the characteristics of the engagement that define its scope.

- (b) Ascertain the reporting objectives of the engagement to plan the timing of the audit and the nature of the communications required.
  - (c) Consider the results of preliminary engagement activities, experience gained on other engagements performed for the entity, where practicable, and other matters relevant to planning the engagement. (Ref: Para A4-A6)
8. In response to matters identified in the establishment of the audit strategy, the auditor shall ascertain the resources necessary to perform the engagement. (Ref: Para A7)
9. The auditor shall develop an audit plan for the audit that includes:
- A description of the nature, timing and extent of planned risk assessment procedures sufficient to assess the risks of material misstatement, as determined under ISA 315 (Redrafted), “Understanding the Entity and Its Environment and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatements.”
  - A description of the nature, timing and extent of planned further audit procedures at the assertion level for each material class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure, as determined under ISA 330 (Redrafted), “The Auditor’s Procedures in Response to Assessed Risks.”
  - Such other audit procedures required to be carried out for the engagement to comply with ISAs.
- Planning for these audit procedures takes place over the course of the audit as the audit plan develops. (Ref: Para A8-A9)
10. To respond to changes in circumstances, the auditor shall update the overall audit strategy and the audit plan as necessary during the course of the audit. (Ref: Para A10)

#### DIRECTION, SUPERVISION, AND REVIEW

11. The auditor shall plan the nature, timing and extent of direction and supervision of engagement team members and review of their work. (Ref: Para A11-A12)

#### Documentation

12. The auditor shall document:
- (a) The overall audit strategy.
  - (b) The audit plan.
  - (c) Any significant changes to the overall audit strategy or the audit plan, the reasons for such changes made during the audit engagement, and the auditor’s response to the circumstances that resulted in such changes. (Ref: Para A13-A15)

#### Additional Considerations in Initial Audit Engagements

13. The auditor shall perform the following activities prior to starting an initial audit:
- (a) Performing procedures regarding the acceptance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement (see ISA 220 for additional guidance).

- (b) Communicating with the previous auditor, where there has been a change of auditors, in compliance with relevant ethical requirements. (Ref: Para A16)

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## **Application Material**

### **Involvement of Key Engagement Team Members** (Ref: Para 4)

A1. Planning an audit involves establishing the overall audit strategy for the engagement and developing an audit plan, in order to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level. The involvement by the engagement partner and other key members of the engagement team in planning the audit assists in bringing to bear their experience and insight, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning process. Adequate planning benefits the audit of financial statements in several ways, including the following:

- Helping to ensure that appropriate attention is devoted to important areas of the audit.
- Helping to ensure that potential problems are identified and resolved on a timely basis.
- Helping to ensure that the audit engagement is properly organized and managed in order to be performed in an effective and efficient manner.
- Assisting in the proper assignment of work to engagement team members.
- Facilitating the direction and supervision of engagement team members and the review of their work.
- Assisting, where applicable, in coordination of work done by auditors of components and experts.

The nature and extent of planning activities will vary according to the size and complexity of the entity, the key engagement team members' previous experience with the entity, and changes in circumstances that occur during the audit engagement.

### **Preliminary Engagement Activities** (Ref: Para 5)

A2. Performance of initial procedures on both client continuance and evaluation of ethical requirements (including independence) at the beginning of the current audit engagement means that they are performed prior to the performance of other significant activities for the current audit engagement. For continuing audit engagements, such initial procedures often occur shortly after (or in connection with) the completion of the previous audit.

A3. Performing these preliminary engagement activities enables the auditor to plan an audit engagement for which:

- The auditor maintains the necessary independence and ability to perform the engagement.
- There are no issues with management integrity that may affect the auditor's willingness to continue the engagement.
- There is no misunderstanding with the client as to the terms of the engagement.

## Planning Activities

### THE OVERALL AUDIT STRATEGY (Ref: Para 6-7)

A4. The following are examples of matters the auditor may consider in establishing the overall audit strategy for an engagement. Many of these matters will also influence the auditor's detailed audit plan.

#### *Characteristics of the Engagement that Define its Scope*

- The financial reporting framework on which the financial information to be audited has been prepared, including any need for reconciliations to another financial reporting framework.
- Industry-specific reporting requirements such as reports mandated by industry regulators.
- The expected audit coverage, including the number and locations of components to be included.
- The nature of the control relationships between a parent and its components that determine how the group is to be consolidated.
- The extent to which components are audited by other auditors.
- The nature of the business segments to be audited, including the need for specialized knowledge.
- The reporting currency to be used, including any need for currency translation for the financial information audited.
- The need for a statutory audit of standalone financial statements in addition to an audit for consolidation purposes.
- The availability of the work of internal auditors and the extent of the auditor's potential reliance on such work.
- The entity's use of service organizations and how the auditor may obtain evidence concerning the design or operation of controls performed by them.
- The expected use of audit evidence obtained in prior audits, for example, audit evidence related to risk assessment procedures and tests of controls.
- The effect of information technology on the audit procedures, including the availability of data and the expected use of computer-assisted audit techniques.
- The coordination of the expected coverage and timing of the audit work with any reviews of interim financial information and the effect on the audit of the information obtained during such reviews.
- The discussion of matters that may affect the audit with firm personnel responsible for performing other services to the entity.
- The availability of client personnel and data.

*Reporting Objectives, Timing of the Audit and Communications Required*

- The entity's timetable for reporting, such as at interim and final stages.
- The organization of meetings with management and those charged with governance to discuss the nature, extent and timing of the audit work.
- The discussion with management and those charged with governance regarding the expected type and timing of reports to be issued and other communications, both written and oral, including the auditor's report, management letters and communications to those charged with governance.
- The discussion with management regarding the expected communications on the status of audit work throughout the engagement and the expected deliverables resulting from the audit procedures.
- Communication with auditors of components regarding the expected types and timing of reports to be issued and other communications in connection with the audit of components.
- The expected nature and timing of communications among engagement team members, including the nature and timing of team meetings and timing of the review of work performed.
- Whether there are any other expected communications with third parties, including any statutory or contractual reporting responsibilities arising from the audit.

*Matters that Determine the Focus of the Engagement Team's Effort and Direction of the Audit*

- The determination of appropriate materiality levels, including:
  - Setting materiality for planning purposes.
  - Setting and communicating materiality for auditors of components.
  - Reconsidering materiality as audit procedures are performed during the course of the audit.
  - Identifying the material components and account balances.
- Audit areas where there is a higher risk of material misstatement.
- The impact of the assessed risk of material misstatement at the overall financial statement level on direction, supervision and review.
- The selection of the engagement team (including, where necessary, the engagement quality control reviewer) and the assignment of audit work to the team members, including the assignment of appropriately experienced team members to areas where there may be higher risks of material misstatement.
- Engagement budgeting, including considering the appropriate amount of time to set aside for areas where there may be higher risks of material misstatement.
- The manner in which the auditor emphasizes to engagement team members the need to maintain a questioning mind and to exercise professional skepticism in gathering and evaluating audit evidence.

- Results of previous audits that involved evaluating the operating effectiveness of internal control, including the nature of identified weaknesses and action taken to address them.
- Evidence of management's commitment to the design and operation of sound internal control, including evidence of appropriate documentation of such internal control.
- Volume of transactions, which may determine whether it is more efficient for the auditor to rely on internal control.
- Importance attached to internal control throughout the entity to the successful operation of the business.
- Significant business developments affecting the entity, including changes in information technology and business processes, changes in key management, and acquisitions, mergers and divestments.
- Significant industry developments such as changes in industry regulations and new reporting requirements.
- Significant changes in the financial reporting framework, such as changes in accounting standards.
- Other significant relevant developments, such as changes in the legal environment affecting the entity.

A5. Once the overall audit strategy has been established, a more detailed audit plan can be developed to address the various matters identified in the overall audit strategy, taking into account the need to achieve the audit objectives through the efficient use of the auditor's resources. Although the overall audit strategy is ordinarily established before the detailed audit plan, the two planning activities are not necessarily discrete or sequential processes but are closely inter-related since changes in one may result in consequential changes to the other.

#### Considerations specific to smaller entities

A6. In audits of small entities, the entire audit may be conducted by a very small audit team. Many audits of small entities involve the engagement partner (who may be a sole practitioner) working with one engagement team member (or without any engagement team members). With a smaller team, co-ordination and communication between team members are easier. Establishing the overall audit strategy for the audit of a small entity need not be a complex or time-consuming exercise; it varies according to the size of the entity and the complexity of the audit. For example, a brief memorandum prepared at the completion of the previous audit, based on a review of the working papers and highlighting issues identified in the audit just completed, updated in the current period based on discussions with the owner-manager, can serve as the basis for planning the current audit engagement.

#### ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES (Ref: Para 8)

A7. The process of developing the overall audit strategy helps the auditor to ascertain the nature, timing and extent of resources necessary to perform the engagement, in particular:

- The resources to deploy for specific audit areas, such as the use of appropriately experienced team members for high risk areas or the involvement of experts on complex matters.
- The amount of resources to allocate to specific audit areas, such as the number of team members assigned to observe the inventory count at material locations, the extent of review of other auditors' work in the case of group audits, or the audit budget in hours to allocate to high risk areas;
- When these resources are deployed, such as whether at an interim audit stage or at key cut-off dates; and
- How such resources are managed, directed and supervised, such as when team briefing and debriefing meetings are expected to be held, how engagement partner and manager reviews are expected to take place (for example, on-site or off-site), and whether to complete engagement quality control reviews.

#### THE AUDIT PLAN (Ref: Para 9)

A8. Planning is not a discrete phase of an audit, but rather a continual and iterative process that often begins shortly after (or in connection with) the completion of the previous audit and continues until the completion of the current audit engagement. Planning, however, includes consideration of the timing of certain activities and audit procedures that need to be completed prior to the performance of further audit procedures. For example, planning addresses the need to consider, prior to the auditor's identification and assessment of the risks of material misstatement and the auditor's performance of further audit procedures at the assertion level, such matters as:

- The discussion among engagement team members.<sup>1</sup>
- The analytical procedures to be applied as risk assessment procedures.
- The obtaining of a general understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the entity and how the entity is complying with that framework
- The determination of materiality.
- The involvement of experts
- The performance of other risk assessment procedures.

A9. The audit plan is more detailed than the overall audit strategy in that it includes the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures to be performed by engagement team members. Planning for these audit procedures takes place over the course of the audit as the audit plan for the engagement develops. For example, planning of the auditor's risk assessment procedures ordinarily occurs early in the audit process. However, planning of the nature, timing and extent

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<sup>1</sup> ISA 315 (Redrafted) provides guidance on the engagement team's discussion of the susceptibility of the entity to material misstatements of the financial statements. ISA 240 (Redrafted), "The Auditor's Responsibility to Consider Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements," provides guidance on the emphasis given during this discussion to the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement due to fraud.



of specific further audit procedures depends on the outcome of those risk assessment procedures. In addition, the auditor may begin the execution of further audit procedures for some classes of transactions, account balances and disclosures before completing the more detailed audit plan of all remaining further audit procedures.

#### CHANGES TO PLANNING DECISIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THE AUDIT (Ref: Para 10)

A10. As a result of unexpected events, changes in conditions, or the audit evidence obtained from the results of audit procedures, the auditor may need to modify the overall audit strategy and audit plan, based on the revised consideration of assessed risks at the assertion level for all or some of the classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures, and thereby the resulting planned nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures. This may be the case when, for example, information comes to the auditor's attention that differs significantly from the information available when the auditor planned the audit procedures, such as when audit evidence obtained through the performance of substantive procedures contradicts the audit evidence obtained with respect to the testing of the operating effectiveness of controls.

#### DIRECTION, SUPERVISION, AND REVIEW (Ref: Para 11)

A11. The nature, timing and extent of the direction and supervision of engagement team members and review of their work vary depending on many factors, including:

- The size and complexity of the entity.
- The area of the audit.
- The assessed risks of material misstatement (for example, an increase in the assessed risk of material misstatement for a given area of the audit ordinarily requires a corresponding increase in the extent and timeliness of direction and supervision of engagement team members, and a more detailed review of their work).
- The capabilities and competence of the individual team members performing the audit work.

ISA 220 contains further guidance on the direction, supervision and review of audit work.

#### Considerations specific to smaller entities

A12. When an audit is carried out entirely by the engagement partner, questions of direction and supervision of engagement team members and review of their work do not arise. In such cases, the engagement partner, having personally conducted all aspects of the work, will be aware of all material issues. Forming an objective view on the appropriateness of the judgments made in the course of the audit can present practical problems when the same individual also performed the entire audit. When particularly complex or unusual issues are involved, and the audit is performed by a sole practitioner, it may be desirable to plan to consult with other suitably-experienced auditors or the auditor's professional body.

#### **Documentation** (Ref: Para 12)

A13. The documentation of the overall audit strategy is a record of the key decisions considered necessary to properly plan the audit and to communicate significant matters to the engagement team. For example, the auditor may summarize the overall audit strategy in the form of a

memorandum that contains key decisions regarding the overall scope, timing and conduct of the audit.

- A14. The documentation of the audit plan is a record of the planned nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures, and further audit procedures at the assertion level for each material class of transaction, account balance, and disclosure in response to the assessed risks. It also serves as a record of the proper planning and performance of the audit procedures that can be reviewed and approved prior to the performance of further audit procedures. The auditor may use standard audit programs or audit completion checklists, tailored as needed to reflect the particular engagement circumstances.
- A15. A record of the significant changes to the overall audit strategy and the audit plan, and resulting changes to the planned nature, timing and extent of audit procedures, explains (a) why the significant changes were made, and (b) the overall strategy and audit plan finally adopted for the audit. It also reflects the appropriate response to the significant changes occurring during the audit.

**Additional Considerations in Initial Audit Engagements** (Ref: Para 13)

- A16. The purpose and objective of planning the audit are the same whether the audit is an initial or recurring engagement. However, for an initial audit, the auditor may need to expand the planning activities because the auditor does not ordinarily have the previous experience with the entity that is considered when planning recurring engagements. For initial audits, additional matters the auditor may consider in developing the overall audit strategy and audit plan include the following:
- Unless prohibited by law or regulation, arrangements to be made with the previous auditor, for example, to review the previous auditor's working papers.
  - Any major issues (including the application of accounting principles or of auditing and reporting standards) discussed with management in connection with the initial selection as auditors, the communication of these matters to those charged with governance and how these matters affect the overall audit strategy and audit plan.
  - The planned audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding opening balances (see ISA 510, "Initial Engagements—Opening Balances").
  - The assignment of firm personnel with appropriate levels of capabilities and competence to respond to anticipated significant risks.
  - Other procedures required by the firm's system of quality control for initial audit engagements (for example, the firm's system of quality control may require the involvement of another partner or senior individual to review the overall audit strategy prior to commencing significant audit procedures or to review reports prior to their issuance).