

**SA 300\***

**Planning an Audit of Financial Statements**  
*(Effective for audits of financial statements  
for periods beginning on or after April 1, 2008)*

---

## Introduction

### Scope of this SA

1. This Standard on Auditing (SA) deals with the auditor's responsibility to plan an audit of financial statements. This SA is framed in the context of recurring audits. Additional considerations in initial audit engagements are separately identified. (Ref: Para. A1-A4)

### Effective Date

2. This SA is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after 1st April 2008.

### Objective

3. 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, including planning and participating in the discussion among engagement team members. (Ref: Para. A5)

#### Preliminary Engagement Activities

5. The auditor shall undertake the following activities at the beginning of the current audit engagement:
- (a) Performing procedures required by SA 220<sup>1</sup>, "Quality Control for an Audit of Financial Statements" regarding the continuance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement;
  - (b) Evaluating compliance with ethical requirements, including independence, as required by SA 220<sup>2</sup>; and
  - (c) Establishing an understanding of the terms of the engagement, as required by SA 210<sup>3</sup>. (Ref: Para. A6-A8)

#### Planning Activities

6. The auditor shall establish an overall audit strategy that sets the scope, timing and direction of the audit, and that guides the development of the audit plan.
7. In establishing the overall audit strategy, the auditor shall:
- (a) Identify the characteristics of the engagement that define its scope;

---

\*Published in December, 2007 issue of the Journal.

<sup>1</sup> SA 220, paragraph 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> SA 220, paragraph 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> SA 210, "Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements," paragraphs 9-13.

- (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 factors that, in the auditor's professional judgment, are significant in directing the engagement team's efforts;*
  - (d) *Consider the results of preliminary engagement activities and, where applicable, whether knowledge gained on other engagements performed by the engagement partner for the entity is relevant; and*
  - (e) *Ascertain the nature, timing and extent of resources necessary to perform the engagement. (Ref: Para. A9-A12)*
8. *The auditor shall develop an audit plan that shall include a description of:*
- (a) *The nature, timing and extent of planned risk assessment procedures, as determined under SA 315 "Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement through Understanding the Entity and Its Environment".*
  - (b) *The nature, timing and extent of planned further audit procedures at the assertion level, as determined under SA 330 "The Auditor's Responses to Assessed Risks".*
  - (c) *Other planned audit procedures that are required to be carried out so that the engagement complies with SAs. (Ref: Para. A13)*
9. *The auditor shall update and change the overall audit strategy and the audit plan as necessary during the course of the audit. (Ref: Para. A14)*
10. *The auditor shall plan the nature, timing and extent of direction and supervision of engagement team members and the review of their work. (Ref: Para. A15-A16)*

**Documentation**

11. *The auditor shall document:*
- (a) *The overall audit strategy;*
  - (b) *The audit plan; and*
  - (c) *Any significant changes made during the audit engagement to the overall audit strategy or the audit plan, and the reasons for such changes. (Ref: Para. A17-A20)*

**Additional Considerations in Initial Audit Engagements**

12. *The auditor shall undertake the following activities prior to starting an initial audit:*
- (a) *Performing procedures required by SA 220 regarding the acceptance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement<sup>4</sup>; and*
  - (b) *Communicating with the predecessor auditor, where there has been a change of auditors, in compliance with relevant ethical requirements. (Ref: Para. A21)*

**Application and Other Explanatory Material**

**The Role and Timing of Planning** (Ref: Para. 1)

A1. *Planning an audit involves establishing the overall audit strategy for the engagement and developing an audit plan. Adequate planning benefits the audit of financial statements in several ways, including the following:*

- *Helping the auditor to devote appropriate attention to important areas of the audit.*
- *Helping the auditor identify and resolve potential problems on a timely basis.*

---

<sup>4</sup> SA 220, paragraphs 12-13.

- Helping the auditor properly organize and manage the audit engagement so that it is performed in an effective and efficient manner.
- Assisting in the selection of engagement team members with appropriate levels of capabilities and competence to respond to anticipated risks, and the proper assignment of work to them.
- 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.

A2. 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.

A3. 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 includes the need to consider, prior to the auditor's identification and assessment of the risks of material misstatement, such matters as:

- The analytical procedures to be applied as risk assessment procedures.
- Obtaining 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.

A4. The auditor may decide to discuss elements of planning with the entity's management to facilitate the conduct and management of the audit engagement (for example, to coordinate some of the planned audit procedures with the work of the entity's personnel). Although these discussions often occur, the overall audit strategy and the audit plan remain the auditor's responsibility. When discussing matters included in the overall audit strategy or audit plan, care is required in order not to compromise the effectiveness of the audit. For example, discussing the nature and timing of detailed audit procedures with management may compromise the effectiveness of the audit by making the audit procedures too predictable.

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

A5. The involvement of the engagement partner and other key members of the engagement team in planning the audit draws on their experience and insight, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning process<sup>5</sup>.

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

A6. Performing the preliminary engagement activities specified in paragraph 5 at the beginning of the current audit engagement assists the auditor in identifying and evaluating events or circumstances that may adversely affect the auditor's ability to plan and perform the audit engagement.

A7. Performing these preliminary engagement activities enables the auditor to plan an audit engagement for

---

<sup>5</sup> SA 315, "Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement Through Understanding the Entity and Its Environment", paragraph 10, establishes requirements and provides guidance on the engagement team's discussion of the susceptibility of the entity to material misstatements of the financial statements. SA 240, "The Auditor's Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements", paragraph 15 provides guidance on the emphasis given during this discussion to the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement due to fraud.

which, for example:

- 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.

A8. The auditor's consideration of client continuance and ethical requirements, including independence, occurs throughout the audit engagement as changes in conditions and circumstances occur. Performing 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 completed 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.

### Planning Activities

#### **The Overall Audit Strategy** (Ref: Para. 6-7)

A9. The process of establishing the overall audit strategy assists the auditor to determine, subject to the completion of the auditor's risk assessment procedures, such matters as:

- 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 to be 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.

A10. The Appendix lists examples of considerations in establishing the overall audit strategy.

A11. Once the overall audit strategy has been established, an 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. The establishment of the overall audit strategy and the detailed audit plan 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*

A12. 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 of, 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, the complexity of the audit, and the size of the engagement team. 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 documented audit strategy for the current audit engagement if it covers the matters noted in paragraph 7.

**The Audit Plan** (Ref: Para. 8)

A13. The audit plan is more detailed than the overall audit strategy that 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 occurs early in the audit process. However, planning the nature, timing and extent 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 planning all remaining further audit procedures.

**Changes to Planning Decisions During the Course of the Audit** (Ref: Para. 9)

A14. 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 and thereby the resulting planned nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures, based on the revised consideration of assessed risks. This may be the case when information comes to the auditor's attention that differs significantly from the information available when the auditor planned the audit procedures. For example, audit evidence obtained through the performance of substantive procedures may contradict the audit evidence obtained through tests of controls.

**Direction, Supervision and Review** (Ref: Para. 10)

A15. 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.

SA 220 contains further guidance on the direction, supervision and review of audit work<sup>6</sup>.

*Considerations Specific to Smaller Entities*

A16. 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 performs 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 consult with other suitably-experienced auditors or the auditor's professional body<sup>7</sup>.

**Documentation** (Ref: Para. 11)

A17. 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

---

<sup>6</sup> SA 220, paragraphs 15-17.

<sup>7</sup> In India, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India governs the accountancy profession to provide services of high quality in the public interest which are accepted worldwide.

regarding the overall scope, timing and conduct of the audit.

A18. 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 in response to the assessed risks. It also serves as a record of the proper planning of the audit procedures that can be reviewed and approved prior to their performance. The auditor may use standard audit programs and/or audit completion checklists, tailored as needed to reflect the particular engagement circumstances.

A19. 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 why the significant changes were made, and 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.

*Considerations Specific to Smaller Entities*

A20. As discussed in paragraph A12, a suitable, brief memorandum may serve as the documented strategy for the audit of a smaller entity. For the audit plan, standard audit programs and/or checklists (see paragraph A18) drawn up on the assumption of few relevant control activities, as is likely to be the case in a smaller entity, may be used provided that they are tailored to the circumstances of the engagement, including the auditor's risk assessments.

**Additional Considerations in Initial Audit Engagements (Ref: Para. 12)**

A21. 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 establishing the overall audit strategy and audit plan include the following:

- Unless prohibited by law or regulation, arrangements to be made with the predecessor auditor, for example, to review the predecessor 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 auditor, the communication of these matters to those charged with governance and how these matters affect the overall audit strategy and audit plan.
- The audit procedures necessary to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding opening balances (see SA 510<sup>8</sup> "Initial Audit Engagements—Opening Balances").
- 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).

**Modifications to ISA 300, "Planning an Audit of Financial Statements"**

SA 300, "Planning an Audit of Financial Statements" does not contain any modifications *vis a vis* ISA 300.

---

<sup>8</sup> SA 510, "Initial Audit Engagements—Opening Balances".

**Appendix**

(Ref: Para. 6-7 and A9-A12)

**Considerations in Establishing the Overall Audit Strategy**

This appendix provides examples of matters the auditor may consider in establishing the overall audit strategy. Many of these matters will also influence the auditor's detailed audit plan. The examples provided cover a broad range of matters applicable to many engagements. While some of the matters referred to below may be required by other SAs, not all matters are relevant to every audit engagement and the list is not necessarily complete.

**Characteristics of the Engagement**

- 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 previous 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 availability of client personnel and data.

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

- 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, timing and extent 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.

- 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.

**Significant Factors, Preliminary Engagement Activities, and Knowledge Gained on Other Engagements**

- The determination of materiality in accordance with SA 320<sup>9</sup>, and, where applicable:
  - Determination of materiality for components and communication thereof to component auditors.
  - Preliminary identification of significant components and material classes of transactions, account balances and disclosures
- Preliminary identification of areas where there may be 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 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 deficiencies and action taken to address them.
- The discussion of matters that may affect the audit with firm personnel responsible for performing other services to the entity.
- Evidence of management's commitment to the design, implementation and maintenance 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.

**Nature, Timing and Extent of Resources**

- 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.

---

<sup>9</sup> SA 320, "Materiality in Planning and Performing an Audit".

**SA 315\***

**Identifying and Assessing the Risk of Material  
Misstatement through understanding the  
Entity and its Environment**  
*(Effective for audits of financial statements  
for periods beginning on or after April 1, 2008)*

---

**Introduction**

**Scope of this SA**

1. This Standard on Auditing (SA) deals with the auditor's responsibility to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, through understanding the entity and its environment, including the entity's internal control.

**Effective Date**

2. This SA is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after April 1, 2008.

**Objective**

3. The objective of the auditor is to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, at the financial statement and assertion levels, through understanding the entity and its environment, including the entity's internal control, thereby providing a basis for designing and implementing responses to the assessed risks of material misstatement. This will help the auditor to reduce the risk of material misstatement to an acceptably low level.

**Definitions**

4. For purposes of the SAs, the following terms have the meanings attributed below:

- (a) **Assertions** – Representations by management, explicit or otherwise, that are embodied in the financial statements, as used by the auditor to consider the different types of potential misstatements that may occur.
- (b) **Business risk** – A risk resulting from significant conditions, events, circumstances, actions or inactions that could adversely affect an entity's ability to achieve its objectives and execute its strategies, or from the setting of inappropriate objectives and strategies.
- (c) **Internal control** – The process designed, implemented and maintained by those charged with governance, management and other personnel to provide reasonable assurance about the achievement of an entity's objectives with regard to reliability of financial reporting, effectiveness and efficiency of operations, safeguarding of assets, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The term "controls" refers to any aspects of one or more of the components of internal control.
- (d) **Risk assessment procedures** – The audit procedures performed to obtain an understanding of the entity and its environment, including the entity's internal control, to identify and assess the risks of material

---

\* Published in February, 2008 issue of the Journal.

misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, at the financial statement and assertion levels.

- (e) Significant risk – An identified and assessed risk of material misstatement that, in the auditor’s judgment, requires special audit consideration.

**Requirements**

**Risk Assessment Procedures and Related Activities**

5. The auditor shall perform risk assessment procedures to provide a basis for the identification and assessment of risks of material misstatement at the financial statement and assertion levels. Risk assessment procedures by themselves, however, do not provide sufficient appropriate audit evidence on which to base the audit opinion. (Ref: Para. A1-A5)

6. The risk assessment procedures shall include the following:

- (a) Inquiries of management and of others within the entity who in the auditor’s judgment may have information that is likely to assist in identifying risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error. (Ref: Para. A6)
- (b) Analytical procedures. (Ref: Para. A7-A10)
- (c) Observation and inspection. (Ref: Para. A11)

7. The auditor shall consider whether information obtained from the auditor’s client acceptance or continuance process is relevant to identifying risks of material misstatement.

8. Where the engagement partner has performed other engagements for the entity, the engagement partner shall consider whether information obtained is relevant to identifying risks of material misstatement.

9. When the auditor intends to use information obtained from the auditor’s previous experience with the entity and from audit procedures performed in previous audits, the auditor shall determine whether changes have occurred since the previous audit that may affect its relevance to the current audit. (Ref: Para. A12-A13)

10. The engagement partner and other key engagement team members shall discuss the susceptibility of the entity’s financial statements to material misstatement, and the application of the applicable financial reporting framework to the entity’s facts and circumstances. The engagement partner shall determine which matters are to be communicated to engagement team members not involved in the discussion. (Ref: Para. A14-A16)

**The Required Understanding of the Entity and Its Environment, Including the Entity’s Internal Control**

***The Entity and Its Environment***

11. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of the following:

- (a) Relevant industry, regulatory, and other external factors including the applicable financial reporting framework. (Ref: Para. A17-A22)
- (b) The nature of the entity, including:
  - (i) its operations;
  - (ii) its ownership and governance structures;
  - (iii) the types of investments that the entity is making and plans to make, including investments in special-purpose entities; and
  - (iv) the way that the entity is structured and how it is financed; to enable the auditor to understand the classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures to be expected in the financial statements. (Ref: Para. A23-A27)

- (c) The entity's selection and application of accounting policies, including the reasons for changes thereto. The auditor shall evaluate whether the entity's accounting policies are appropriate for its business and consistent with the applicable financial reporting framework and accounting policies used in the relevant industry. (Ref: Para. A28)
- (d) The entity's objectives and strategies, and those related business risks that may result in risks of material misstatement. (Ref: Para. A29-A35)
- (e) The measurement and review of the entity's financial performance. (Ref: Para. A36-A41)

***The Entity's Internal Control***

12. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit. Although most controls relevant to the audit are likely to relate to financial reporting, not all controls that relate to financial reporting are relevant to the audit. It is a matter of the auditor's professional judgment whether a control, individually or in combination with others, is relevant to the audit. (Ref: Para. A42-A65)

*Nature and Extent of the Understanding of Relevant Controls*

13. When obtaining an understanding of controls that are relevant to the audit, the auditor shall evaluate the design of those controls and determine whether they have been implemented, by performing procedures in addition to inquiry of the entity's personnel. (Ref: Para. A66-A68)

*Components of Internal Control*

*Control environment*

14. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of the control environment. As part of obtaining this understanding, the auditor shall evaluate whether:

- (a) Management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, has created and maintained a culture of honesty and ethical behavior; and
- (b) The strengths in the control environment elements collectively provide an appropriate foundation for the other components of internal control, and whether those other components are not undermined by deficiencies in the control environment. (Ref: Para. A69-A78)

*The entity's risk assessment process*

15. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of whether the entity has a process for:

- (a) Identifying business risks relevant to financial reporting objectives;
- (b) Estimating the significance of the risks;
- (c) Assessing the likelihood of their occurrence; and
- (d) Deciding about actions to address those risks. (Ref: Para. A79)

16. If the entity has established such a process (referred to hereafter as the 'entity's risk assessment process'), the auditor shall obtain an understanding of it, and the results thereof. Where the auditor identifies risks of material misstatement that management failed to identify, the auditor shall evaluate whether there was an underlying risk of a kind that the auditor expects would have been identified by the entity's risk assessment process. If there is such a risk, the auditor shall obtain an understanding of why that process failed to identify it, and evaluate whether the process is appropriate to its circumstances or determine if there is a significant deficiency in internal control with regard to the entity's risk assessment process.

17. If the entity has not established such a process or has an ad hoc process, the auditor shall discuss with management whether business risks relevant to financial reporting objectives have been identified and how they have been addressed. The auditor shall evaluate whether the absence of a documented risk assessment

process is appropriate in the circumstances, or determine whether it represents a significant deficiency in internal control. (Ref: Para. A80)

The information system, including the related business processes, relevant to financial reporting, and communication.

18. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of the information system, including the related business processes, relevant to financial reporting, including the following areas:

- (a) The classes of transactions in the entity's operations that are significant to the financial statements;
- (b) The procedures, within both information technology (IT) and manual systems, by which those transactions are initiated, recorded, processed, corrected as necessary, transferred to the general ledger and reported in the financial statements;
- (c) The related accounting records, supporting information and specific accounts in the financial statements that are used to initiate, record, process and report transactions; this includes the correction of incorrect information and how information is transferred to the general ledger. The records may be in either manual or electronic form;
- (d) How the information system captures events and conditions, other than transactions, that are significant to the financial statements;
- (e) The financial reporting process used to prepare the entity's financial statements, including significant accounting estimates and disclosures;
- (f) Controls surrounding journal entries, including non-standard journal entries used to record non-recurring, unusual transactions or adjustments. (Ref: Para. A81-A85)

19. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of how the entity communicates financial reporting roles and responsibilities and significant matters relating to financial reporting, including:

- (a) Communications between management and those charged with governance; and
- (b) External communications, such as those with regulatory authorities. (Ref: Para. A86-A87)

Control activities relevant to the audit

20. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of control activities relevant to the audit, being those the auditor judges it necessary to understand in order to assess the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level and design further audit procedures responsive to assessed risks. An audit requires an understanding of only those control activities related to significant class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure in the financial statements and the assertions which the auditor finds relevant in his risk assessment process. (Ref: Para. A88-A94)

21. In understanding the entity's control activities, the auditor shall obtain an understanding of how the entity has responded to risks arising from IT. (Ref: Para. A95-A97)

Monitoring of controls

22. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of the major activities that the entity uses to monitor internal control over financial reporting, including those related to those control activities relevant to the audit, and how the entity initiates remedial actions to deficiencies in its controls. (Ref: Para. A98-A100)

23. If the entity has an internal audit function,<sup>1</sup> the auditor shall obtain an understanding of the following in order to determine whether the internal audit function is likely to be relevant to the audit:

---

<sup>1</sup> SA 610, "Using the Work of Internal Auditors", paragraph 7(a).

- (a) The nature of the internal audit function's responsibilities and how the internal audit function fits in the entity's organisational structure; and
  - (b) The activities performed, or to be performed, by the internal audit function. (Ref: Para. A101-A103)
24. The auditor shall obtain an understanding of the sources of the information used in the entity's monitoring activities, and the basis upon which management considers the information to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose. (Ref: Para. A104)

**Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement**

25. The auditor shall identify and assess the risks of material misstatement at:
- (a) the financial statement level; and (Ref: Para. A105-A108)
  - (b) the assertion level for classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures; (Ref: Para. A109-A113)

to provide a basis for designing and performing further audit procedures.

26. For this purpose, the auditor shall:
- (a) Identify risks throughout the process of obtaining an understanding of the entity and its environment, including relevant controls that relate to the risks, and by considering the classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures in the financial statements; (Ref: Para. A114-A115)
  - (b) Assess the identified risks, and evaluate whether they relate more pervasively to the financial statements as a whole and potentially affect many assertions;
  - (c) Relate the identified risks to what can go wrong at the assertion level, taking account of relevant controls that the auditor intends to test; and (Ref: Para. A116-A118)
  - (d) Consider the likelihood of misstatement, including the possibility of multiple misstatements, and whether the potential misstatement is of a magnitude that could result in a material misstatement.

**Risks that Require Special Audit Consideration**

27. As part of the risk assessment as described in paragraph 25, the auditor shall determine whether any of the risks identified are, in the auditor's judgment, a significant risk. In exercising this judgment, the auditor shall exclude the effects of identified controls related to the risk.

28. In exercising judgment as to which risks are significant risks, the auditor shall consider at least the following:

- (a) Whether the risk is a risk of fraud;
- (b) Whether the risk is related to recent significant economic, accounting, or other developments like changes in regulatory environment, etc., and, therefore, requires specific attention;
- (c) The complexity of transactions;
- (d) Whether the risk involves significant transactions with related parties;
- (e) The degree of subjectivity in the measurement of financial information related to the risk, especially those measurements involving a wide range of measurement uncertainty; and
- (f) Whether the risk involves significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business for the entity, or that otherwise appear to be unusual. (Ref: Para. A119-A123)

29. When the auditor has determined that a significant risk exists, the auditor shall obtain an understanding of the entity's controls, including control activities, relevant to that risk. (Ref: Para. A124-A126)

**Risks for Which Substantive Procedures Alone Do Not Provide Sufficient Appropriate Audit Evidence**

30. In respect of some risks, the auditor may judge that it is not possible or practicable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence only from substantive procedures. Such risks may relate to the inaccurate or incomplete recording of routine and significant classes of transactions or account balances, the characteristics of which often permit highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention. In such cases, the entity's controls over such risks are relevant to the audit and the auditor shall obtain an understanding of them. (Ref: Para. A127-A129)

#### **Revision of Risk Assessment**

31. The auditor's assessment of the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level may change during the course of the audit as additional audit evidence is obtained. In circumstances where the auditor obtains audit evidence from performing further audit procedures, or if new information is obtained, either of which is inconsistent with the audit evidence on which the auditor originally based the assessment, the auditor shall revise the assessment and modify the further planned audit procedures accordingly. (Ref: Para. A130)

#### **Documentation**

32. The auditor shall document:

- (a) The discussion among the engagement team where required by paragraph 10, and the significant decisions reached;
- (b) Key elements of the understanding obtained regarding each of the aspects of the entity and its environment specified in paragraph 11 and of each of the internal control components specified in paragraphs 14-24; the sources of information from which the understanding was obtained; and the risk assessment procedures performed;
- (c) The identified and assessed risks of material misstatement at the financial statement level and at the assertion level as required by paragraph 25; and
- (d) The risks identified, and related controls about which the auditor has obtained an understanding, as a result of the requirements in paragraphs 27-30. (Ref: Para. A131-A134)

#### **Application and Other Explanatory Material**

##### **Risk Assessment Procedures and Related Activities** (Ref: Para. 5)

A1. Obtaining an understanding of the entity and its environment, including the entity's internal control (referred to hereafter as an "understanding of the entity"), is a continuous, dynamic process of gathering, updating and analysing information throughout the audit. The understanding establishes a frame of reference within which the auditor plans the audit and exercises professional judgment throughout the audit, for example, when:

- ◆ Assessing risks of material misstatement of the financial statements;
- ◆ Determining materiality in accordance with SA 320<sup>2</sup>;
- ◆ Considering the appropriateness of the selection and application of accounting policies, and the adequacy of financial statement disclosures;
- ◆ Identifying areas where special audit consideration may be necessary, for example, related party transactions, the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption, or considering the business purpose of transactions;
- ◆ Developing expectations for use when performing analytical procedures;

<sup>2</sup> SA 320, "Materiality in Planning and Performing an Audit".

- ◆ Responding to the assessed risks of material misstatement, including designing and performing further audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence; and
- ◆ Evaluating the sufficiency and appropriateness of audit evidence obtained, such as the appropriateness of assumptions and of management's oral and written representations.

A2. Information obtained by performing risk assessment procedures and related activities may be used by the auditor as audit evidence to support assessments of the risks of material misstatement. In addition, the auditor may obtain audit evidence about classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosures and related assertions and about the operating effectiveness of controls, even though such procedures were not specifically planned as substantive procedures or as tests of controls. The auditor also may choose to perform substantive procedures or tests of controls concurrently with risk assessment procedures because it is efficient to do so.

A3. The auditor uses professional judgment to determine the extent of the understanding required. The auditor's primary consideration is whether the understanding that has been obtained is sufficient to meet the objective stated in this SA. The depth of the overall understanding that is required by the auditor is less than that possessed by management in managing the entity.

A4. The risks to be assessed include both those due to error and those due to fraud, and both are covered by this SA. However, the significance of fraud is such that further requirements and guidance are included in SA 240<sup>3</sup>, "The Auditor's Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements", in relation to risk assessment procedures and related activities to obtain information that is used to identify the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

A5. Although the auditor is required to perform all the risk assessment procedures described in paragraph 6 in the course of obtaining the required understanding of the entity (see paragraphs 11-24), the auditor is not required to perform all of them for each aspect of that understanding. Other procedures may be performed where the information to be obtained therefrom may be helpful in identifying risks of material misstatement. Examples of such procedures include:

- ◆ Reviewing information obtained from external sources such as trade and economic journals; reports by analysts, banks, or rating agencies; or regulatory or financial publications.
- ◆ Making inquiries of the entity's external legal counsel or of valuation experts that the entity has used.

***Inquiries of Management and Others Within the Entity*** (Ref: Para. 6(a))

A6. Much of the information obtained by the auditor's inquiries is obtained from management and those responsible for financial reporting. However, the auditor may also obtain information, or a different perspective in identifying risks of material misstatement, through inquiries of others within the entity and other employees with different levels of authority. For example:

- ◆ Inquiries directed towards those charged with governance may help the auditor understand the environment in which the financial statements are prepared.
- ◆ Inquiries directed toward internal audit personnel may provide information about internal audit procedures performed during the year relating to the design and effectiveness of the entity's internal control and whether management has satisfactorily responded to findings from those procedures.
- ◆ Inquiries of employees involved in initiating, processing or recording complex or unusual transactions may help the auditor to evaluate the appropriateness of the selection and application of certain accounting policies.

---

<sup>3</sup> SA 240, "The Auditor's Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements", paragraphs 12-24.

- ◆ Inquiries directed toward in-house legal counsel may provide information about such matters as litigation, compliance with laws and regulations, knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the entity, warranties, post-sales obligations, arrangements (such as joint ventures) with business partners and the meaning of contract terms.
- ◆ Inquiries directed towards marketing or sales personnel may provide information about changes in the entity's marketing strategies, sales trends, or contractual arrangements with its customers.

**Analytical Procedures** (Ref: Para. 6(b))

A7. Analytical procedures performed as risk assessment procedures may identify aspects of the entity of which the auditor was unaware and may assist in assessing the risks of material misstatement in order to provide a basis for designing and implementing responses to the assessed risks\*. Analytical procedures performed as risk assessment procedures may include both financial and non-financial information, for example, the relationship between sales and square footage of selling space or volume of goods sold.

A8. Analytical procedures may help identify the existence of unusual transactions or events, and amounts, ratios, and trends that might indicate matters that have audit implications. Unusual or unexpected relationships that are identified may assist the auditor in identifying risks of material misstatement, especially risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

A9. However, when such analytical procedures use data aggregated at a high level (which may be the situation with analytical procedures performed as risk assessment procedures), the results of those analytical procedures only provide a broad initial indication about whether a material misstatement may exist. Accordingly, in such cases, consideration of other information that has been gathered when identifying the risks of material misstatement together with the results of such analytical procedures may assist the auditor in understanding and evaluating the results of the analytical procedures.

*Considerations Specific to Smaller Entities*

A10. Some smaller entities may not have interim or monthly financial information that can be used for purposes of analytical procedures. In these circumstances, although the auditor may be able to perform limited analytical procedures for purposes of planning the audit or obtain some information through inquiry, the auditor may need to plan to perform analytical procedures to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement when an early draft of the entity's financial statements is available.

**Observation and Inspection** (Ref: Para. 6(c))

A11. Observation and inspection may support inquiries of management and others, and may also provide information about the entity and its environment. Examples of such audit procedures include observation or inspection of the following:

- ◆ The entity's operations.
- ◆ Documents (such as business plans and strategies), records, and internal control manuals.
- ◆ Reports prepared by management (such as quarterly management reports and interim financial statements) and those charged with governance (such as minutes of board of directors' meetings).
- ◆ The entity's premises and plant facilities.

**Information Obtained in Prior Periods** (Ref: Para. 9)

A12. The auditor's previous experience with the entity and audit procedures performed in previous audits may provide the auditor with information about such matters as:

---

\* SA 520, "Analytical Procedures", paragraphs A1-A3 describe the nature of analytical procedures.

- ◆ Past misstatements and whether they were corrected on a timely basis.
- ◆ The nature of the entity and its environment, and the entity's internal control (including deficiencies in internal control).
- ◆ Significant changes that the entity or its operations may have undergone since the prior financial period, which may assist the auditor in gaining a sufficient understanding of the entity to identify and assess risks of material misstatement.

A13. The auditor is required to determine whether information obtained in prior periods remains relevant, if the auditor intends to use that information for the purposes of the current audit. This is because changes in the control environment, for example, may affect the relevance of information obtained in the prior year. To determine whether changes have occurred that may affect the relevance of such information, the auditor may make inquiries and perform other appropriate audit procedures, such as walk-throughs of relevant systems.

***Discussion Among the Engagement Team*** (Ref: Para. 10)

A14. The discussion among the engagement team about the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement:

- ◆ Provides an opportunity for more experienced engagement team members, including the engagement partner, to share their insights based on their knowledge of the entity.
- ◆ Allows the engagement team members to exchange information about the business risks to which the entity is subject and about how and where the financial statements might be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud or error.
- ◆ Assists the engagement team members to gain a better understanding of the potential for material misstatement of the financial statements in the specific areas assigned to them, and to understand how the results of the audit procedures that they perform may affect other aspects of the audit including the decisions about the nature, timing, and extent of further audit procedures.
- ◆ Provides a basis upon which engagement team members communicate and share new information obtained throughout the audit that may affect the assessment of risks of material misstatement or the audit procedures performed to address these risks.

SA 240 provides further requirements and guidance in relation to the discussion among the engagement team about the risks of fraud.<sup>4</sup>

A15. It is not always necessary or practical for the discussion to include all members in a single discussion (as, for example, in a multi-location audit), nor is it necessary for all of the members of the engagement team to be informed of all of the decisions reached in the discussion. The engagement partner may discuss matters with key members of the engagement team including, if considered appropriate, specialists and those responsible for the audits of components, while delegating discussion with others, taking account of the extent of communication considered necessary throughout the engagement team. A communications plan, agreed by the engagement partner, may be useful.

*Considerations Specific to Smaller Entities*

A16. Many small audits are carried out entirely by the engagement partner (who may be a sole practitioner). In such situations, it is the engagement partner who, having personally conducted the planning of the audit, would be responsible for considering the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement due to fraud or error.

---

<sup>4</sup> SA 240, paragraph 15.

**The Required Understanding of the Entity and Its Environment, Including the Entity's Internal Control*****The Entity and Its Environment***

*Industry, Regulatory and Other External Factors* (Ref: Para. 11(a))

**Industry factors**

A17. Relevant industry factors include industry conditions such as the competitive environment, supplier and customer relationships, and technological developments. Examples of matters the auditor may consider include:

- ◆ The market and competition, including demand, capacity, and price competition.
- ◆ Cyclical or seasonal activity.
- ◆ Product technology relating to the entity's products.
- ◆ Energy supply and cost.

A18. The industry in which the entity operates may give rise to specific risks of material misstatement arising from the nature of the business or the degree of regulation. For example, long-term contracts may involve significant estimates of revenues and expenses that give rise to risks of material misstatement. In such cases, it is important that the engagement team include members with sufficient relevant knowledge and experience<sup>5</sup>.

**Regulatory factors**

A19. Relevant regulatory factors include the regulatory environment. The regulatory environment encompasses, among other matters, the applicable financial reporting framework and the legal and political environment. Examples of matters the auditor may consider include:

- ◆ Accounting principles and industry specific practices.
- ◆ Regulatory framework for a regulated industry.
- ◆ Legislation and regulation that significantly affect the entity's operations, including direct supervisory activities.
- ◆ Taxation (corporate and other).
- ◆ Government policies currently affecting the conduct of the entity's business, such as monetary, including foreign exchange controls, fiscal, financial incentives (for example, government aid programs), and tariffs or trade restrictions policies.
- ◆ Environmental requirements affecting the industry and the entity's business.

A20. SA 250, "Consideration of Laws and Regulations in an Audit of Financial Statements"<sup>6</sup>, includes some specific requirements related to the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the entity and the industry.

A21. In case of the audits of certain entities, in addition to legislation or regulations, there may be government policy requirements and resolutions of the legislature that affect the entity's operations. Such elements are essential to consider when obtaining an understanding of the entity and its environment.

**Other external factors**

A22. Examples of other external factors affecting the entity that the auditor may consider include the general economic conditions, interest rates and availability of financing, and inflation or currency revaluation.

<sup>5</sup> SA 220, "Quality Control for an Audit of Financial Statements", paragraph 14.

<sup>6</sup> SA 250, "Consideration of Laws and Regulations in an Audit of Financial Statements", paragraph 10.

*Nature of the Entity* (Ref: Para.11(b))

A23. An understanding of the nature of an entity enables the auditor to understand such matters as:

- ◆ Whether the entity has a complex structure, for example with subsidiaries or other components in multiple locations. Complex structures often introduce issues that may give rise to risks of material misstatement. Such issues may include whether goodwill, joint ventures, investments, or special-purpose entities are accounted for appropriately.
- ◆ The ownership, and relations between owners and other people or entities. This understanding assists in determining whether related party transactions have been identified and accounted for appropriately. SA 550, “Related Parties”<sup>7</sup>, establishes requirements and provides guidance on the auditor’s considerations relevant to related parties.

A24. Examples of matters that the auditor may consider when obtaining an understanding of the nature of the entity include:

- ◆ Business operations – such as:
  - Nature of revenue sources, products or services, and markets, including involvement in electronic commerce such as internet sales and marketing activities.
  - Conduct of operations (for example, stages and methods of production, or activities exposed to environmental risks).
  - Alliances, joint ventures, and outsourcing activities.
  - Geographic dispersion and industry segmentation.
  - Location of production facilities, warehouses, and offices, and location and quantities of inventories.
  - Key customers and important suppliers of goods and services, employment arrangements (including the existence of union contracts, pension and other post employment benefits, stock option or incentive bonus arrangements, and government regulation related to employment matters).
  - Research and development activities and expenditures.
  - Transactions with related parties.
- ◆ Investments and investment activities – such as:
  - Planned or recently executed acquisitions or divestitures.
  - Investments and dispositions of securities and loans.
  - Capital investment activities.
  - Investments in non-consolidated entities, including partnerships, joint ventures and special-purpose entities.
- ◆ Financing and financing activities – such as:
  - Major subsidiaries and associated entities, including consolidated and non-consolidated structures.
  - Debt structure and related terms, including off-balance-sheet financing arrangements and leasing

---

<sup>7</sup> SA 550, “Related Parties”. Reference may also be made to the Accounting Standard (AS) 18, “Related Party Disclosures” for definition of related party and related party transactions.

arrangements.

- Beneficial owners (local, foreign, business reputation and experience) and related parties.
- Use of derivative financial instruments.
- ◆ Financial reporting – such as:
  - Accounting principles and industry - specific practices, including industry - specific significant categories (for example, loans and investments for banks, or research and development for pharmaceuticals).
  - Revenue recognition practices.
  - Accounting for fair values.
  - Foreign currency assets, liabilities and transactions.
  - Accounting for unusual or complex transactions including those in controversial or emerging areas (for example, accounting for stock-based compensation).

A25. Significant changes in the entity from prior periods may give rise to, or change, risks of material misstatement.

#### *Nature of Special-Purpose Entities*

A26. A special-purpose entity (sometimes referred to as a special purpose vehicle) is an entity that is generally established for a narrow and well-defined purpose, such as to effect a lease or a securitisation of financial assets, or to carry out research and development activities. It may take the form of a corporation, trust, partnership or unincorporated entity. The entity on behalf of which the special-purpose entity has been created may often transfer assets to the latter (e.g., as part of a de-recognition transaction involving financial assets), obtain the right to use the latter's assets, or perform services for the latter, while other parties may provide the funding to the latter. As SA 550 indicates, in some circumstances, a special-purpose entity may be a related party of the entity.<sup>8</sup>

A27. Financial reporting frameworks often specify detailed conditions that are deemed to amount to control, or circumstances under which the special-purpose entity should be considered for consolidation. The interpretation of the requirements of such frameworks often demands a detailed knowledge of the relevant agreements involving the special- purpose entity.

#### *The Entity's Selection and Application of Accounting Policies (Ref: Para.11(c))*

A28. An understanding of the entity's selection and application of accounting policies may encompass such matters as:

- ◆ The methods the entity uses to account for significant and unusual transactions.
- ◆ The effect of significant accounting policies in controversial or emerging areas for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus.
- ◆ Changes in the entity's accounting policies.
- ◆ Financial reporting standards and laws and regulations that are new to the entity, and when and how the entity will adopt such requirements.

#### *Objectives and Strategies and Related Business Risks (Ref. Para.11(d))*

A29. The entity conducts its business in the context of industry, regulatory and other internal and external

---

<sup>8</sup> SA 550, 'Related Parties', paragraph A7.

factors. To respond to these factors, the entity's management or those charged with governance define objectives, which are the overall plans for the entity. Strategies are the approaches by which management intends to achieve its objectives. The entity's objectives and strategies may change over time.

A30. Business risk is broader than the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, though it includes the latter. Business risk may arise from change or complexity. A failure to recognise the need for change may also give rise to business risk. Business risk may arise, for example, from:

- ◆ The development of new products or services that may fail;
- ◆ A market which, even if successfully developed, is inadequate to support a product or service; or
- ◆ Flaws in a product or service that may result in liabilities and reputational risk.

A31. An understanding of the business risks facing the entity increases the likelihood of identifying risks of material misstatement, since most business risks will eventually have financial consequences and, therefore, an effect on the financial statements. However, the auditor does not have a responsibility to identify or assess all business risks because not all business risks give rise to risks of material misstatement.

A32. Examples of matters that the auditor may consider when obtaining an understanding of the entity's objectives, strategies and related business risks that may result in a risk of material misstatement of the financial statements include:

- ◆ Industry developments (a potential related business risk might be, for example, that the entity does not have the personnel or expertise to deal with the changes in the industry).
- ◆ New products and services (a potential related business risk might be, for example, that there is increased product liability).
- ◆ Expansion of the business (a potential related business risk might be, for example, that the demand has not been accurately estimated).
- ◆ New accounting requirements (a potential related business risk might be, for example, incomplete or improper implementation, or increased costs).
- ◆ Regulatory requirements (a potential related business risk might be, for example, that there is increased legal exposure).
- ◆ Current and prospective financing requirements (a potential related business risk might be, for example, the loss of financing due to the entity's inability to meet requirements).
- ◆ Use of IT (a potential related business risk might be, for example, that systems and processes are incompatible).
- ◆ The effects of implementing a strategy, particularly any effects that will lead to new accounting requirements (a potential related business risk might be, for example, incomplete or improper implementation).

A33. A business risk may have an immediate consequence for the risk of material misstatement for classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures at the assertion level or the financial statement level. For example, the business risk arising from a contracting customer base may increase the risk of material misstatement associated with the valuation of receivables. However, the same risk, particularly in combination with a contracting economy, may also have a longer-term consequence, which the auditor considers when assessing the appropriateness of the going concern assumption. Whether a business risk may result in a risk of material misstatement is, therefore, considered in light of the entity's circumstances. Examples of conditions and events that may indicate risks of material misstatement are indicated in the Appendix 2.

A34. Usually, management identifies business risks and develops approaches to address them. Such a risk

assessment process is part of internal control and is discussed in paragraph 15 and paragraphs A79-A80.

A35. In case of audits of certain entities, “management objectives” may be influenced by concerns regarding public accountability and may include objectives which have their source in legislation, regulations, and government directions.

*Measurement and Review of the Entity's Financial Performance (Ref: Para. 11(e))*

A36. Management and others will measure and review those things they regard as important. Performance measures, whether external or internal, create pressures on the entity. These pressures, in turn, may motivate management to take action to improve the business performance or to misstate the financial statements. Accordingly, an understanding of the entity's performance measures assists the auditor in considering whether pressures to achieve performance targets may result in management actions that increase the risks of material misstatement, including those due to fraud – See SA 240 for requirements and guidance in relation to the risks of fraud.

A37. The measurement and review of financial performance is not the same as the monitoring of controls (discussed as a component of internal control in paragraphs A98-A104), though their purposes may overlap:

- ◆ The measurement and review of performance is directed at whether business performance is meeting the objectives set by management (or third parties).
- ◆ Monitoring of controls is specifically concerned with the effective operation of internal control.

In some cases, however, performance indicators also provide information that enables management to identify deficiencies in internal control.

A38. Examples of internally-generated information used by management for measuring and reviewing financial performance, and which the auditor may consider, include:

- ◆ Key performance indicators (financial and non-financial) and key ratios, trends and operating statistics.
- ◆ Period-on-period financial performance analyses.
- ◆ Budgets, forecasts, variance analyses, segment information and divisional, departmental or other level performance reports.
- ◆ Employee performance measures and incentive compensation policies.
- ◆ Comparisons of an entity's performance with that of competitors.

A39. External parties may also measure and review the entity's financial performance. For example, external information such as analysts' reports and credit rating agency reports may represent useful information for the auditor. Such reports can often be obtained from the entity being audited.

A40. Internal measures may highlight unexpected results or trends requiring management to determine their cause and take corrective action (including, in some cases, the detection and correction of misstatements on a timely basis). Performance measures may also indicate to the auditor that risks of misstatement of related financial statement information do exist. For example, performance measures may indicate that the entity has unusually rapid growth or profitability when compared to that of other entities in the same industry. Such information, particularly if combined with other factors such as performance-based bonus or incentive remuneration, may indicate the potential risk of management bias in the preparation of the financial statements.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A41. Smaller entities often do not have processes to measure and review financial performance. Inquiry of management may reveal that it relies on certain key indicators for evaluating financial performance and taking appropriate action. If such inquiry indicates an absence of performance measurement or review, there may be an increased risk of misstatements not being detected and corrected.

***The Entity's Internal Control***

A42. An understanding of internal control assists the auditor in identifying types of potential misstatements and factors that affect the risks of material misstatement, and in designing the nature, timing, and extent of further audit procedures.

A43. The following application material on internal control is presented in four sections, as follows:

- ◆ General Nature and Characteristics of Internal Control.
- ◆ Controls Relevant to the Audit.
- ◆ Nature and Extent of the Understanding of Relevant Controls.
- ◆ Components of Internal Control.

*General Nature and Characteristics of Internal Control* (Ref: Para. 12)

Purpose of internal control

A44. Internal control is designed, implemented and maintained to address identified business risks that threaten the achievement of any of the entity's objectives that concern:

- ◆ The reliability of the entity's financial reporting;
- ◆ The effectiveness and efficiency of its operations;
- ◆ Its compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and
- ◆ Safeguarding of assets.

The way in which internal control is designed, implemented and maintained varies with an entity's size and complexity.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A45. Smaller entities may use less structured means and simpler processes and procedures to achieve their objectives.

Limitations of internal control

A46. Internal control, no matter how effective, can provide an entity with only reasonable assurance about achieving the entity's financial reporting objectives. The likelihood of their achievement is affected by inherent limitations of internal control. These include the realities that human judgment in decision-making can be faulty and that breakdowns in internal control can occur because of human error. For example, there may be an error in the design of, or in the change to, a control. Equally, the operation of a control may not be effective, such as where information produced for the purposes of internal control (for example, an exception report) is not effectively used because the individual responsible for reviewing the information does not understand its purpose or fails to take appropriate action.

A47. Additionally, controls can be circumvented by the collusion of two or more people or inappropriate management override of internal control. For example, management may enter into side agreements with customers that alter the terms and conditions of the entity's standard sales contracts, which may result in improper revenue recognition. Also, edit checks in a software program that are designed to identify and report transactions that exceed specified credit limits may be overridden or disabled.

A48. Further, in designing and implementing controls, management may make judgments on the nature and extent of the controls it chooses to implement, and the nature and extent of the risks it chooses to assume.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A49. Smaller entities often have fewer employees which may limit the extent to which segregation of duties is

practicable. However, in a small owner-managed entity, the owner-manager<sup>9</sup> may be able to exercise more effective oversight than in a larger entity. This oversight may compensate for the generally more limited opportunities for segregation of duties.

A50. On the other hand, the owner-manager may be more able to override controls because the system of internal control is less structured. This is taken into account by the auditor when identifying the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

#### Division of internal control into components

A51. The division of internal control into the following five components, for purposes of the SAs, provides a useful framework for auditors to consider how different aspects of an entity's internal control may affect the audit:

- (a) The control environment;
- (b) The entity's risk assessment process;
- (c) The information system, including the related business processes, relevant to financial reporting, and communication;
- (d) Control activities; and
- (e) Monitoring of controls.

The division does not necessarily reflect how an entity designs, implements and maintains internal control, or how it may classify any particular component. Auditors may use different terminology or frameworks to describe the various aspects of internal control, and their effect on the audit than those used in this SA, provided all the components described in this SA are addressed.

A52. Application material relating to the five components of internal control as they relate to a financial statement audit is set out in paragraphs A69-A104 below. Appendix 1 provides further explanation of these components of internal control.

#### Characteristics of manual and automated elements of internal control relevant to the auditor's risk assessment

A53. An entity's system of internal control contains manual elements and often contains automated elements. The characteristics of manual or automated elements are relevant to the auditor's risk assessment and further audit procedures based thereon.

A54. The use of manual or automated elements in internal control also affects the manner in which transactions are initiated, recorded, processed, and reported:

- ◆ Controls in a manual system may include such procedures as approvals and reviews of transactions, and reconciliations and follow-up of reconciling items. Alternatively, an entity may use automated procedures to initiate, record, process, and report transactions, in which case records in electronic format replace paper documents.
- ◆ Controls in IT systems consist of a combination of automated controls (for example, controls embedded in computer programs) and manual controls. Further, manual controls may be independent of IT, may use information produced by IT, or may be limited to monitoring the effective functioning of IT and of automated controls, and to handling exceptions. When IT is used to initiate, record, process or report transactions, or other financial data for inclusion in financial statements, the systems and programs may include controls related to the corresponding assertions for material accounts or may be critical to the

---

<sup>9</sup> Owner-manager refers to the proprietor of an entity who is involved in running the entity on a day-to-day basis.

effective functioning of manual controls that depend on IT.

An entity's mix of manual and automated elements in internal control varies with the nature and complexity of the entity's use of IT.

A55. Generally, IT benefits an entity's internal control by enabling an entity to:

- ◆ Consistently apply predefined business rules and perform complex calculations in processing large volumes of transactions or data;
- ◆ Enhance the timeliness, availability, and accuracy of information;
- ◆ Facilitate the additional analysis of information;
- ◆ Enhance the ability to monitor the performance of the entity's activities and its policies and procedures;
- ◆ Reduce the risk that controls will be circumvented; and
- ◆ Enhance the ability to achieve effective segregation of duties by implementing security controls in applications, databases, and operating systems.

A56. IT also poses specific risks to an entity's internal control, including, for example:

- ◆ Reliance on systems or programs that are inaccurately processing data, processing inaccurate data, or both.
- ◆ Unauthorised access to data that may result in destruction of data or improper changes to data, including the recording of unauthorised or non-existent transactions, or inaccurate recording of transactions. Particular risks may arise where multiple users access a common database.
- ◆ The possibility of IT personnel gaining access privileges beyond those necessary to perform their assigned duties thereby breaking down segregation of duties.
- ◆ Unauthorised changes to data in master files.
- ◆ Unauthorised changes to systems or programs.
- ◆ Failure to make necessary changes to systems or programs.
- ◆ Inappropriate manual intervention.
- ◆ Potential loss of data or inability to access data as required.

A57. Manual elements in internal control may be more suitable where judgment and discretion are required such as for the following circumstances:

- ◆ Large, unusual or non-recurring transactions.
- ◆ Circumstances where errors are difficult to define, anticipate or predict.
- ◆ In changing circumstances that require a control response outside the scope of an existing automated control.
- ◆ In monitoring the effectiveness of automated controls.

A58. Manual elements in internal control may be less reliable than automated elements because they can be more easily bypassed, ignored, or overridden and they are also more prone to simple errors and mistakes. Consistency of application of a manual control element cannot therefore be assumed. Manual control elements may be less suitable for the following circumstances:

- ◆ High volume or recurring transactions, or in situations where errors that can be anticipated or predicted can be prevented, or detected and corrected, by control parameters that are automated.
- ◆ Control activities where the specific ways to perform the control can be adequately designed and

automated.

A59. The extent and nature of the risks to internal control vary depending on the nature and characteristics of the entity's information system. The entity responds to the risks arising from the use of IT or from use of manual elements in internal control by establishing effective controls in light of the characteristics of the entity's information system.

*Controls Relevant to the Audit*

A60. There is a direct relationship between an entity's objectives and the controls it implements to provide reasonable assurance about their achievement. The entity's objectives, and therefore controls, relate to financial reporting, operations and compliance; however, not all of these objectives and controls are relevant to the auditor's risk assessment.

A61. Factors relevant to the auditor's judgment about whether a control, individually or in combination with others, is relevant to the audit may include such matters as the following:

- ◆ Materiality.
- ◆ The significance of the related risk.
- ◆ The size of the entity.
- ◆ The nature of the entity's business, including its organisation and ownership characteristics.
- ◆ The diversity and complexity of the entity's operations.
- ◆ Applicable legal and regulatory requirements.
- ◆ The circumstances and the applicable component of internal control.
- ◆ The nature and complexity of the systems that are part of the entity's internal control, including the use of service organisations.
- ◆ Whether, and how, a specific control, individually or in combination with others, prevents, or detects and corrects, material misstatement.

A62. Controls over the completeness and accuracy of information produced by the entity may be relevant to the audit if the auditor intends to make use of the information in designing and performing further procedures. For example, in auditing revenue by applying standard prices to records of sales volume, the auditor considers the accuracy of the price information and the completeness and accuracy of the sales volume data. Controls relating to operations and compliance objectives may also be relevant to an audit if they relate to data the auditor evaluates or uses in applying audit procedures.

A63. Internal control over safeguarding of assets against unauthorised acquisition, use, or disposition may include controls relating to both financial reporting and operations objectives. The auditor's consideration of such controls is generally limited to those relevant to the reliability of financial reporting. For example, use of access controls, such as passwords, that limit access to the data and programs that process cash disbursements may be relevant to a financial statement audit. Conversely, safeguarding controls relating to operations objectives, such as controls to prevent the excessive use of materials in production, generally are not relevant to a financial statement audit.

A64. An entity generally has controls relating to objectives that are not relevant to an audit and therefore need not be considered. For example, an entity may rely on a sophisticated system of automated controls to provide efficient and effective operations (such as an airline's system of automated controls to maintain flight schedules), but these controls ordinarily would not be relevant to the audit. Further, although internal control applies to the entire entity or to any of its operating units or business processes, an understanding of internal control relating to each of the entity's operating units and business processes may not be relevant to the audit.

A65. In certain circumstances, the statute or the regulation governing the entity may require the auditor to report on compliance with certain specific aspects of internal controls as a result, the auditor's review of internal control may be broader and more detailed.

*Nature and Extent of the Understanding of Relevant Controls* (Ref: Para. 13)

A66. Evaluating the design of a control involves considering whether the control, individually or in combination with other controls, is capable of effectively preventing, or detecting and correcting, material misstatements. Implementation of a control means that the control exists and that the entity is using it. There is little point in assessing the implementation of a control that is not effective, and so the design of a control is considered first. An improperly designed control may represent a significant deficiency in internal control.

A67. Risk assessment procedures to obtain audit evidence about the design and implementation of relevant controls may include:

- ◆ Inquiring of entity personnel.
- ◆ Observing the application of specific controls.
- ◆ Inspecting documents and reports.
- ◆ Tracing transactions through the information system relevant to financial reporting.

Inquiry alone, however, is not sufficient for such purposes.

A68. Obtaining an understanding of an entity's controls is not sufficient to test their operating effectiveness, unless there is some automation that provides for the consistent operation of the controls. For example, obtaining audit evidence about the implementation of a manual control at a point in time does not provide audit evidence about the operating effectiveness of the control at other times during the period under audit. However, because of the inherent consistency of IT processing (see paragraph A55), performing audit procedures to determine whether an automated control has been implemented may serve as a test of that control's operating effectiveness, depending on the auditor's assessment and testing of controls such as those over program changes. Tests of the operating effectiveness of controls are further described in SA 330, "The Auditor's Responses to Assessed Risks".

*Components of Internal Control—Control Environment* (Ref: Para. 14)

A69. The control environment includes the governance and management functions and the attitudes, awareness, and actions of those charged with governance and management concerning the entity's internal control and its importance in the entity. The control environment sets the tone of an organization, influencing the control consciousness of its people.

A70. Elements of the control environment that may be relevant when obtaining an understanding of the control environment include the following:

- (a) *Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values* – These are essential elements that influence the effectiveness of the design, administration and monitoring of controls.
- (b) *Commitment to competence* – Matters such as management's consideration of the competence levels for particular jobs and how those levels translate into requisite skills and knowledge.
- (c) *Participation by those charged with governance* – Attributes of those charged with governance such as:
  - ◆ Their independence from management.
  - ◆ Their experience and stature.

- ◆ The extent of their involvement and the information they receive, and the scrutiny of activities.
  - ◆ The appropriateness of their actions, including the degree to which difficult questions are raised and pursued with management, and their interaction with internal and external auditors.
- (d) Management's philosophy and operating style – Characteristics such as management's:
- ◆ Approach to taking and managing business risks.
  - ◆ Attitudes and actions toward financial reporting.
  - ◆ Attitudes toward information processing and accounting functions and personnel.
- (e) *Organisational structure* – The framework within which an entity's activities for achieving its objectives are planned, executed, controlled, and reviewed.
- (f) *Assignment of authority and responsibility* - Matters such as how authority and responsibility for operating activities are assigned and how reporting relationships and authorisation hierarchies are established.
- (g) *Human resource policies and practices* – Policies and practices that relate to, for example, recruitment, orientation, training, evaluation, counselling, promotion, compensation, and remedial actions.

#### Audit evidence for elements of the control environment

A71. Relevant audit evidence may be obtained through a combination of inquiries and other risk assessment procedures such as corroborating inquiries through observation or inspection of documents. For example, through inquiries of management and employees, the auditor may obtain an understanding of how management communicates to employees its views on business practices and ethical behavior. The auditor may then determine whether relevant controls have been implemented by considering, for example, whether management has a written code of conduct and whether it acts in a manner that supports the code.

#### Effect of the control environment on the assessment of the risks of material misstatement

A72. Some elements of an entity's control environment have a pervasive effect on assessing the risks of material misstatement. For example, an entity's control consciousness is influenced significantly by those charged with governance, because one of their roles is to counterbalance pressures on management in relation to financial reporting that may arise from market demands or remuneration schemes. The effectiveness of the design of the control environment in relation to participation by those charged with governance is therefore influenced by such matters as:

- ◆ Their independence from management and their ability to evaluate the actions of management.
- ◆ Whether they understand the entity's business transactions.
- ◆ The extent to which they evaluate whether the financial statements are prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

A73. An active and independent board of directors may influence the philosophy and operating style of senior management. However, other elements may be more limited in their effect. For example, although human resource policies and practices directed toward hiring competent financial, accounting, and IT personnel may reduce the risk of errors in processing financial information, they may not mitigate a strong bias by top management to overstate earnings.

A74. The existence of a satisfactory control environment can be a positive factor when the auditor assesses the risks of material misstatement. However, although it may help reduce the risk of fraud, a satisfactory control environment is not an absolute deterrent to fraud. Conversely, deficiencies in the control environment may undermine the effectiveness of controls, in particular in relation to fraud. For example, management's failure to commit sufficient resources to address IT security risks may adversely affect

internal control by allowing improper changes to be made to computer programs or to data, or unauthorized transactions to be processed. As explained in SA 330, the control environment also influences the nature, timing, and extent of the auditor's further procedures<sup>10</sup>.

A75. The control environment in itself does not prevent, or detect and correct, a material misstatement. It may, however, influence the auditor's evaluation of the effectiveness of other controls (for example, the monitoring of controls and the operation of specific control activities) and thereby, the auditor's assessment of the risks of material misstatement.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A76. The control environment within small entities is likely to differ from larger entities. For example, those charged with governance in small entities may not include an independent or outside member, and the role of governance may be undertaken directly by the owner-manager where there are no other owners. The nature of the control environment may also influence the significance of other controls, or their absence. For example, the active involvement of an owner-manager may mitigate certain of the risks arising from a lack of segregation of duties in a small business; it may, however, increase other risks, for example, the risk of override of controls.

A77. In addition, audit evidence for elements of the control environment in smaller entities may not be available in documentary form, in particular where communication between management and other personnel may be informal, yet effective. For example, small entities might not have a written code of conduct but, instead, develop a culture that emphasizes the importance of integrity and ethical behavior through oral communication and by management example.

A78. Consequently, the attitudes, awareness and actions of management or the owner-manager are of particular importance to the auditor's understanding of a smaller entity's control environment.

*Components of Internal Control—The Entity's Risk Assessment Process (Ref: Para. 15)*

A79. The entity's risk assessment process forms the basis for how management determines the risks to be managed. If that process is appropriate to the circumstances, including the nature, size and complexity of the entity, it assists the auditor in identifying risks of material misstatement. Whether the entity's risk assessment process is appropriate to the circumstances is a matter of judgment.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities (Ref: Para. 17)*

A80. There is unlikely to be an established risk assessment process in a small entity. In such cases, it is likely that management will identify risks through direct personal involvement in the business. Irrespective of the circumstances, however, inquiry about identified risks and how they are addressed by management is still necessary.

*Components of Internal Control—The Information System, Including the Related Business Processes, Relevant to Financial Reporting, and Communication*

The information system, including related business processes, relevant to financial reporting (Ref: Para. 18)

A81. The information system relevant to financial reporting objectives, which includes the accounting system, consists of the procedures and records designed and established to:

- ◆ Initiate, record, process, and report entity transactions (as well as events and conditions) and to maintain accountability for the related assets, liabilities, and equity;
- ◆ Resolve incorrect processing of transactions, for example, automated suspense files and

---

<sup>10</sup> SA 330, paragraphs A2-A3.

- procedures followed to clear suspense items out on a timely basis;
- ◆ Process and account for system overrides or bypasses to controls;
  - ◆ Transfer information from transaction processing systems to the general ledger;
  - ◆ Capture information relevant to financial reporting for events and conditions other than transactions, such as the depreciation and amortisation of assets and changes in the recoverability of accounts receivables; and
  - ◆ Ensure information required to be disclosed by the applicable financial reporting framework is accumulated, recorded, processed, summarised and appropriately reported in the financial statements.

#### Journal entries

- A82. An entity's information system typically includes the use of standard journal entries that are required on a recurring basis to record transactions. Examples might be journal entries to record sales, purchases, and cash disbursements in the general ledger, or to record accounting estimates that are periodically made by management, such as changes in the estimate of uncollectible accounts receivable.
- A83. An entity's financial reporting process also includes the use of non-standard journal entries to record non-recurring, unusual transactions or adjustments. Examples of such entries include consolidating adjustments and entries for a business combination or disposal or non-recurring estimates such as the impairment of an asset. In manual general ledger systems, non-standard journal entries may be identified through inspection of ledgers, journals, and supporting documentation. When automated procedures are used to maintain the general ledger and prepare financial statements, such entries may exist only in electronic form and may therefore be more easily identified through the use of computer-assisted audit techniques.

#### Related business processes

- A84. An entity's business processes are the activities designed to:
- ◆ Develop, purchase, produce, sell and distribute an entity's products and services;
  - ◆ Ensure compliance with laws and regulations; and
  - ◆ Record information, including accounting and financial reporting information.

Business processes result in the transactions that are recorded, processed and reported by the information system. Obtaining an understanding of the entity's business processes, which include how transactions are originated, assists the auditor obtain an understanding of the entity's information system relevant to financial reporting in a manner that is appropriate to the entity's circumstances.

#### *Considerations specific to smaller entities*

- A85. Information systems and related business processes relevant to financial reporting in small entities are likely to be less sophisticated than in larger entities, but their role is just as significant. Small entities with active management involvement may not need extensive descriptions of accounting procedures, sophisticated accounting records, or written policies. Understanding the entity's systems and processes may therefore be easier in an audit of smaller entities, and may be more dependent on inquiry than on review of documentation. The need to obtain an understanding, however, remains important.

#### Communication (Ref: Para. 19)

- A86. Communication by the entity of the financial reporting roles and responsibilities and of significant matters relating to financial reporting involves providing an understanding of individual roles and responsibilities pertaining to internal control over financial reporting. It includes such matters as the extent to which

personnel understand how their activities in the financial reporting information system relate to the work of others and the means of reporting exceptions to an appropriate higher level within the entity. Communication may take such forms as policy manuals and financial reporting manuals. Open communication channels help ensure that exceptions are reported and acted on.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A87. Communication may be less structured and easier to achieve in a small entity than in a larger entity due to fewer levels of responsibility and management's greater visibility and availability.

*Components of Internal Control—Control Activities (Ref: Para. 20)*

A88. Control activities are the policies and procedures that help ensure that management directives are carried out. Control activities, whether within IT or manual systems, have various objectives and are applied at various organisational and functional levels. Examples of specific control activities include those relating to the following:

- ◆ Authorization.
- ◆ Performance reviews.
- ◆ Information processing.
- ◆ Physical controls.
- ◆ Segregation of duties.

A89. Control activities that are relevant to the audit are:

- ◆ Those that are required to be treated as such, being control activities that relate to significant risks and those that relate to risks for which substantive procedures alone do not provide sufficient appropriate audit evidence, as required by paragraphs 29 and 30, respectively; or
- ◆ Those that are considered to be relevant in the judgment of the auditor.

A90. The auditor's judgment about whether a control activity is relevant to the audit is influenced by the risk that the auditor has identified that may give rise to a material misstatement and whether the auditor thinks it is likely to be appropriate to test the operating effectiveness of the control in determining the extent of substantive testing.

A91. The auditor's emphasis may be on identifying and obtaining an understanding of control activities that address the areas where the auditor considers that risks of material misstatement are likely to be higher. When multiple control activities each achieve the same objective, it is unnecessary to obtain an understanding of each of the control activities related to such objective.

A92. The auditor's knowledge about the presence or absence of control activities obtained from the understanding of the other components of internal control assists the auditor in determining whether it is necessary to devote additional attention to obtaining an understanding of control activities.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

A93. The concepts underlying control activities in small entities are likely to be similar to those in larger entities, but the formality with which they operate may vary. Further, small entities may find that certain types of control activities are not relevant because of controls applied by management. For example, management's sole authority for granting credit to customers and approving significant purchases can provide strong control over important account balances and transactions, lessening or removing the need for more detailed control activities.

A94. Control activities relevant to the audit of a smaller entity are likely to relate to the main transaction cycles

such as revenues, purchases and employment expenses.

Risks arising from IT (Ref: Para. 21)

- A95. The use of IT affects the way that control activities are implemented. From the auditor's perspective, controls over IT systems are effective when they maintain the integrity of information and the security of the data such systems process, and include effective general IT-controls and application controls.
- A96. General IT-controls are policies and procedures that relate to many applications and support the effective functioning of application controls. They apply to mainframe, miniframe, and end-user environments. General IT-controls that maintain the integrity of information and security of data commonly include controls over the following:
- ◆ Data center and network operations.
  - ◆ System software acquisition, change and maintenance.
  - ◆ Program change.
  - ◆ Access security.
  - ◆ Application system acquisition, development, and maintenance.

They are generally implemented to deal with the risks referred to in paragraph A56 above.

- A97. Application controls are manual or automated procedures that typically operate at a business process level and apply to the processing of individual applications. Application controls can be preventive or detective in nature and are designed to ensure the integrity of the accounting records. Accordingly, application controls relate to procedures used to initiate, record, process and report transactions or other financial data. These controls help ensure that transactions occurred, are authorised, and are completely and accurately recorded and processed. Examples include edit checks of input data, and numerical sequence checks with manual follow-up of exception reports or correction at the point of data entry.

*Components of Internal Control—Monitoring of Controls* (Ref: Para. 22)

- A98. Monitoring of controls is a process to assess the effectiveness of internal control performance over time. It involves assessing the effectiveness of controls on a timely basis and taking necessary remedial actions. Management accomplishes monitoring of controls through ongoing activities, separate evaluations, or a combination of the two. Ongoing monitoring activities are often built into the normal recurring activities of an entity and include regular management and supervisory activities.
- A99. Management's monitoring activities may include using information from communications from external parties such as customer complaints and regulator comments that may indicate problems or highlight areas in need of improvement.

*Considerations specific to smaller entities*

- A100. Management's monitoring of control is often accomplished by management's or the owner-manager's close involvement in operations. This involvement often will identify significant variances from expectations and inaccuracies in financial data leading to remedial action to the control.

Internal Audit Functions (Ref: Para 23)

- A101. The entity's internal audit function is likely to be relevant to the audit if the nature of the internal audit function's responsibilities and activities are related to the entity's financial reporting, and the auditor expects to use the work of the internal auditors to modify the nature or timing, or reduce the extent, of audit procedures to be performed. When the auditor determines that the internal audit function is likely to be relevant to the audit, SA 610 applies.

A102. The objectives of an internal audit function, and therefore the nature of its responsibilities and its status within the organisation, vary widely and depend on the size and structure of the entity and the requirements of management and, where applicable, those charged with governance. The responsibilities of an internal audit function may include, for example, monitoring of internal control, risk management, and review of compliance with laws and regulations. On the other hand, the responsibilities of the internal audit function may be limited to the review of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of operations, for example, and accordingly, may not relate to the entity's financial reporting.

A103. If the nature of the internal audit function's responsibilities are related to the entity's financial reporting, the external auditor's consideration of the activities performed, or to be performed by, the internal audit function may include review of the internal audit function's audit plan for the period, if any, and discussion of that plan with the internal auditors.

Sources of information (Ref: Para. 24)

A104. Much of the information used in monitoring may be produced by the entity's information system. If management assumes that data used for monitoring are accurate without having a basis for that assumption, errors that may exist in the information could potentially lead management to incorrect conclusions from its monitoring activities. Accordingly, an understanding of:

- ◆ the sources of the information related to the entity's monitoring activities; and
- ◆ the basis upon which management considers the information to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose; is required as part of the auditor's understanding of the entity's monitoring activities as a component of internal control.

#### **Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement**

##### ***Assessment of Risks of Material Misstatement at the Financial Statement Level*** (Ref: Para. 25 (a))

A105. Risks of material misstatement at the financial statement level refer to risks that relate pervasively to the financial statements as a whole and potentially affect many assertions. Risks of this nature are not necessarily risks identifiable with specific assertions at the class of transactions, account balance, or disclosure level. Rather, they represent circumstances that may increase the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level, for example, through management override of internal control. Financial statement level risks may be especially relevant to the auditor's consideration of the risks of material misstatement arising from fraud.

A106. Risks at the financial statement level may derive in particular from deficient control environment (although these risks may also relate to other factors, such as declining economic conditions). For example, deficiencies such as management's lack of competence may have a more pervasive effect on the financial statements and may require an overall response by the auditor.

A107. The auditor's understanding of internal control may raise doubts about the auditability of an entity's financial statements. For example:

- ◆ Concerns about the integrity of the entity's management may be so serious as to cause the auditor to conclude that the risk of management misrepresentation in the financial statements is such that an audit cannot be conducted.
- ◆ Concerns about the condition and reliability of an entity's records may cause the auditor to conclude that it is unlikely that sufficient appropriate audit evidence will be available to support an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.

A108. SA 705, "Modifications to the Opinion in the Independent Auditor's Report" establishes requirements and provides guidance in determining whether there is a need for the auditor to consider a qualification or

disclaimer of opinion or, as may be required in some cases, to withdraw from the engagement where this is legally possible.

**Assessment of Risks of Material Misstatement at the Assertion Level** (Ref: Para. 25(b))

A109. Risks of material misstatement at the assertion level for classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures need to be considered because such consideration directly assists in determining the nature, timing, and extent of further audit procedures at the assertion level necessary to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement at the assertion level, the auditor may conclude that the identified risks relate more pervasively to the financial statements as a whole and potentially affect many assertions.

*The Use of Assertions*

A110. In representing that the financial statements are in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework, management implicitly or explicitly makes assertions regarding the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of the various elements of financial statements and related disclosures.

A111. Assertions used by the auditor to consider the different types of potential misstatements that may occur fall into the following three categories and may take the following forms:

- (a) Assertions about classes of transactions and events for the period under audit:
  - (i) Occurrence—transactions and events that have been recorded have occurred and pertain to the entity.
  - (ii) Completeness—all transactions and events that should have been recorded have been recorded.
  - (iii) Accuracy—amounts and other data relating to recorded transactions and events have been recorded appropriately.
  - (iv) Cut-off—transactions and events have been recorded in the correct accounting period.
  - (v) Classification—transactions and events have been recorded in the proper accounts.
- (b) Assertions about account balances at the period end:
  - (i) Existence—assets, liabilities, and equity interests exist.
  - (ii) Rights and obligations—the entity holds or controls the rights to assets, and liabilities are the obligations of the entity.
  - (iii) Completeness—all assets, liabilities and equity interests that should have been recorded have been recorded.
  - (iv) Valuation and allocation—assets, liabilities, and equity interests are included in the financial statements at appropriate amounts and any resulting valuation or allocation adjustments are appropriately recorded.
- (c) Assertions about presentation and disclosure:
  - (i) Occurrence and rights and obligations—disclosed events, transactions, and other matters have occurred and pertain to the entity.
  - (ii) Completeness—all disclosures that should have been included in the financial statements have been included.
  - (iii) Classification and understandability—financial information is appropriately presented and described, and disclosures are clearly expressed.
  - (iv) Accuracy and valuation—financial and other information are disclosed fairly and at appropriate

amounts.

A112. The auditor may use the assertions as described above or may express them differently provided all aspects described above have been covered. For example, the auditor may choose to combine the assertions about transactions and events with the assertions about account balances.

A113. When making assertions about the financial statements of certain entities, especially, for example, where the Government is a major stakeholder, in addition to those assertions set out in paragraph A111, management may often assert that transactions and events have been carried out in accordance with legislation or proper authority. Such assertions may fall within the scope of the financial statement audit.

**Process of Identifying Risks of Material Misstatement** (Ref: Para. 26(a))

A114. Information gathered by performing risk assessment procedures, including the audit evidence obtained in evaluating the design of controls and determining whether they have been implemented, is used as audit evidence to support the risk assessment. The risk assessment determines the nature, timing, and extent of further audit procedures to be performed.

A115. **Appendix 2** provides examples of conditions and events that may indicate the existence of risks of material misstatement.

**Relating Controls to Assertions** [Ref: Para. 26(c)]

A116. In making risk assessments, the auditor may identify the controls that are likely to prevent, or detect and correct, material misstatement in specific assertions. Generally, it is useful to obtain an understanding of controls and relate them to assertions in the context of processes and systems in which they exist because individual control activities often do not in themselves address a risk. Often, only multiple control activities, together with other components of internal control, will be sufficient to address a risk.

A117. Conversely, some control activities may have a specific effect on an individual assertion embodied in a particular class of transactions or account balance. For example, the control activities that an entity established to ensure that its personnel are properly counting and recording the annual physical inventory relate directly to the existence and completeness assertions for the inventory account balance.

A118. Controls can be either directly or indirectly related to an assertion. The more indirect the relationship, the less effective that control may be in preventing, or detecting and correcting, misstatements in that assertion. For example, a sales manager's review of a summary of sales activity for specific stores by region ordinarily is only indirectly related to the completeness assertion for sales revenue. Accordingly, it may be less effective in reducing risk for that assertion than controls more directly related to that assertion, such as matching shipping documents with billing documents.

**Significant Risks**

*Identifying Significant Risks* (Ref: Para. 28)

A119. Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions or judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, due to either size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty. Routine, non-complex transactions that are subject to systematic processing are less likely to give rise to significant risks.

A120. Risks of material misstatement may be greater for significant non-routine transactions arising from matters such as the following:

- ◆ Greater management intervention to specify the accounting treatment.
- ◆ Greater manual intervention for data collection and processing.

- ◆ Complex calculations or accounting principles.
- ◆ The nature of non-routine transactions, which may make it difficult for the entity to implement effective controls over the risks.

A121. Risks of material misstatement may be greater for significant judgmental matters that require the development of accounting estimates, arising from matters such as the following:

- ◆ Accounting principles for accounting estimates or revenue recognition may be subject to differing interpretation.
- ◆ Required judgment may be subjective or complex, or require assumptions about the effects of future events, for example, judgment about fair value.

A122. SA 330 describes the consequences for further audit procedures of identifying a risk as significant.<sup>11</sup>

Significant risks relating to the risks of material misstatement due to fraud

A123. SA 240 provides further requirements and guidance in relation to the identification and assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.<sup>12</sup>

*Understanding Controls Related to Significant Risks* (Ref: Para. 29)

A124. Although risks relating to significant non-routine or judgmental matters are often less likely to be subject to routine controls, management may have other responses intended to deal with such risks. Accordingly, the auditor's understanding of whether the entity has designed and implemented controls for significant risks arising from non-routine or judgmental matters includes whether and how management responds to the risks. Such responses might include:

- ◆ Control activities such as a review of assumptions by senior management or experts.
- ◆ Documented processes for estimations.
- ◆ Approval by those charged with governance.

A125. For example, where there are one-off events such as the receipt of notice of a significant lawsuit, consideration of the entity's response may include such matters as whether it has been referred to appropriate experts (such as internal or external legal counsel), whether an assessment has been made of the potential effect, and how it is proposed that the circumstances are to be disclosed in the financial statements.

A126. In some cases, management may not have appropriately responded to significant risks of material misstatement by implementing controls over these significant risks. Failure by management to implement such controls is an indicator of a significant deficiency in internal control.<sup>13</sup>

***Risks for Which Substantive Procedures Alone Do Not Provide Sufficient Appropriate Audit Evidence***  
(Ref: Para. 30)

A127. Risks of material misstatement may relate directly to the recording of routine classes of transactions or account balances, and the preparation of reliable financial statements. Such risks may include risks of inaccurate or incomplete processing for routine and significant classes of transactions such as an entity's revenue, purchases, and cash receipts or cash payments.

<sup>11</sup> SA 330, paragraphs 15 and 21.

<sup>12</sup> SA 240, paragraph 25-27.

<sup>13</sup> SA 265, "Communicating Deficiencies in Internal Control to Those Charged with Governance and Management", Paragraph A7.

A128. Where such routine business transactions are subject to highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention, it may not be possible to perform only substantive procedures in relation to the risk. For example, the auditor may consider this to be the case in circumstances where a significant amount of an entity's information is initiated, recorded, processed, or reported only in electronic form such as in an integrated system. In such cases:

- ◆ Audit evidence may be available only in electronic form, and its sufficiency and appropriateness usually depend on the effectiveness of controls over its accuracy and completeness.
- ◆ The potential for improper initiation or alteration of information to occur and not be detected may be greater if appropriate controls are not operating effectively.

A129. The consequences for further audit procedures of identifying such risks are described in SA 330.<sup>14</sup>

**Revision of Risk Assessment** (Ref: Para. 31)

A130. During the audit, information may come to the auditor's attention that differs significantly from the information on which the risk assessment was based. For example, the risk assessment may be based on an expectation that certain controls are operating effectively. In performing tests of those controls, the auditor may obtain audit evidence that they were not operating effectively at relevant times during the audit. Similarly, in performing substantive procedures the auditor may detect misstatements in amounts or frequency greater than is consistent with the auditor's risk assessments. In such circumstances, the risk assessment may not appropriately reflect the true circumstances of the entity and the further planned audit procedures may not be effective in detecting material misstatements. See SA 330 for further guidance.

**Documentation** (Ref: Para. 32)

A131. The manner in which the requirements of paragraph 32 are documented is for the auditor to determine using professional judgment. For example, in audits of small entities the documentation may be incorporated in the auditor's documentation of the overall strategy and audit plan that is required by SA 300, "Planning an Audit of Financial Statements"<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, for example, the results of the risk assessment may be documented separately, or may be documented as part of the auditor's documentation of further procedures (see SA 330)<sup>16</sup>. The form and extent of the documentation is influenced by the nature, size and complexity of the entity and its internal control, availability of information from the entity and the audit methodology and technology used in the course of the audit.

A132. For entities that have uncomplicated businesses and processes relevant to financial reporting, the documentation may be simple in form and relatively brief. It is not necessary to document the entirety of the auditor's understanding of the entity and matters related to it. Key elements of understanding documented by the auditor include those on which the auditor based the assessment of the risks of material misstatement.

A133. The extent of documentation may also reflect the experience and capabilities of the members of the audit engagement team. Provided the requirements of SA 230, "Audit Documentation" are always met, an audit undertaken by an engagement team comprising less experienced individuals may require more detailed documentation to assist them to obtain an appropriate understanding of the entity than one that includes experienced individuals.

---

<sup>14</sup> SA 330, paragraph 8.

<sup>15</sup> SA 300, paragraphs 7 and 9.

<sup>16</sup> SA 330, paragraph 8.

A134. For recurring audits, certain documentation may be carried forward, updated as necessary to reflect changes in the entity's business or processes.

### **Material Modifications to ISA 315, Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement Through Understanding the Entity and Its Environment**

#### **Deletions**

1. Paragraph A21 of the Application Section of ISA 315 deals with the application of the requirements of ISA 315 to the audits of public sector entities regarding the effect of ministerial directives, government policy requirements and resolutions of the legislature on the operations of the entity. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that even in case of non public sector entities, the operation of the entity may be affected by government policy requirements and resolutions of the legislature. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A21, highlighting the fact that in some cases, the entity's operations may be affected by such requirements/resolutions, has been retained.

2. Paragraph A35 of the Application Section of ISA 315 deals with the application of the requirements of ISA 315 to the audits of public sector entities regarding the influence of concerns relating to public accountability, including objectives having source in legislation, regulations, government ordinances, etc., on 'management objectives'. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that even in case of non public sector entities, the management's objectives are influenced by such aspects. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A35, highlighting the fact that in some cases, the management objectives may be influenced by the concerns relating to public accountability, including objectives having source in legislation, regulations, government directions, has been retained.

3. Paragraph A65 of the Application Section of ISA 315 deals with the application of the requirements of ISA 315 to the audits of public sector entities regarding the additional reporting responsibilities of the auditor with respect to internal control because of any code of practice or compliance with legislative authorities. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that even in case of non public sector entities, the statute or regulations may require the auditor to report on compliance with certain specific aspects of internal control. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A65, highlighting such additional reporting responsibilities of the auditor, has been retained.

4. Paragraph A113 of the Application Section of ISA 315 deals with the application of the requirements of ISA 315 to the audits of public sector entities regarding the relevance of management's assertions that transactions and events have been carried out in accordance with legislation or proper authority, for the financial statement audit. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that even in case of non public sector entities, there may be similar assertions made by the management that may fall within the scope of the financial statement audit. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A113, highlighting such fact, has been retained and an example has been added.

## Appendix 1

(Ref: Paras. 4(c), 14-23 and A65-A97)

### Internal Control Components

1. This appendix further explains the components of internal control, as set out in paragraphs 4(c), 14-24 and A69-A104, as they relate to a financial statement audit.

### Control Environment

2. The control environment encompasses the following elements:
  - (a) *Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values.* The effectiveness of controls cannot rise above the integrity and ethical values of the people who create, administer, and monitor them. Integrity and ethical behavior are the product of the entity's ethical and behavioral standards, how they are communicated, and how they are reinforced in practice. The enforcement of integrity and ethical values includes, for example, management actions to eliminate or mitigate incentives or temptations that might prompt personnel to engage in dishonest, illegal, or unethical acts. The communication of entity policies on integrity and ethical values may include the communication of behavioral standards to personnel through policy statements and codes of conduct and by example.
  - (b) *Commitment to competence.* Competence is the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish tasks that define the individual's job.
  - (c) *Participation by those charged with governance.* An entity's control consciousness is influenced significantly by those charged with governance. The importance of the responsibilities of those charged with governance is recognised in codes of practice and other laws and regulations or guidance produced for the benefit of those charged with governance. Other responsibilities of those charged with governance include oversight of the design and effective operation of whistle blower procedures and the process for reviewing the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
  - (d) *Management's philosophy and operating style.* Management's philosophy and operating style encompass a broad range of characteristics. For example, management's attitudes and actions toward financial reporting may manifest themselves through conservative or aggressive selection from available alternative accounting principles, or conscientiousness and conservatism with which accounting estimates are developed.
  - (e) *Organizational structure.* Establishing a relevant organisational structure includes considering key areas of authority and responsibility and appropriate lines of reporting. The appropriateness of an entity's organisational structure depends, in part, on its size and the nature of its activities.
  - (f) *Assignment of authority and responsibility.* The assignment of authority and responsibility may include policies relating to appropriate business practices, knowledge and experience of key personnel, and resources provided for carrying out duties. In addition, it may include policies and communications directed at ensuring that all personnel understand the entity's objectives, know how their individual actions interrelate and contribute to those objectives, and recognise how and for what they will be held accountable.
  - (g) *Human resource policies and practices.* Human resource policies and practices often demonstrate important matters in relation to the control consciousness of an entity. For example, standards for recruiting the most qualified individuals – with emphasis on educational background, prior work experience, past accomplishments, and evidence of integrity and ethical behavior – demonstrate an entity's commitment to competent and trustworthy people. Training policies that communicate prospective roles and responsibilities and include practices such as training schools and seminars

illustrate expected levels of performance and behavior. Promotions driven by periodic performance appraisals demonstrate the entity's commitment to the advancement of qualified personnel to higher levels of responsibility.

#### **Entity's Risk Assessment Process**

3. For financial reporting purposes, the entity's risk assessment process includes how management identifies business risks relevant to the preparation of financial statements in accordance with the entity's applicable financial reporting framework, estimates their significance, assesses the likelihood of their occurrence, and decides upon actions to respond to and manage them and the results thereof. For example, the entity's risk assessment process may address how the entity considers the possibility of unrecorded transactions or identifies and analyses significant estimates recorded in the financial statements.
4. Risks relevant to reliable financial reporting include external and internal events, transactions or circumstances that may occur and adversely affect an entity's ability to initiate, record, process, and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in the financial statements. Management may initiate plans, programs, or actions to address specific risks or it may decide to accept a risk because of cost or other considerations. Risks can arise or change due to circumstances such as the following:
  - ◆ *Changes in operating environment.* Changes in the regulatory or operating environment can result in changes in competitive pressures and significantly different risks.
  - ◆ *New personnel.* New personnel may have a different focus on or understanding of internal control.
  - ◆ *New or revamped information systems.* Significant and rapid changes in information systems can change the risk relating to internal control.
  - ◆ *Rapid growth.* Significant and rapid expansion of operations can strain controls and increase the risk of a breakdown in controls.
  - ◆ *New technology.* Incorporating new technologies into production processes or information systems may change the risk associated with internal control.
  - ◆ *New business models, products, or activities.* Entering into business areas or transactions with which an entity has little experience may introduce new risks associated with internal control.
  - ◆ *Corporate restructurings.* Restructurings may be accompanied by staff reductions and changes in supervision and segregation of duties that may change the risk associated with internal control.
  - ◆ *Expanded foreign operations.* The expansion or acquisition of foreign operations carries new and often unique risks that may affect internal control, for example, additional or changed risks from foreign currency transactions.
  - ◆ *New accounting pronouncements.* Adoption of new accounting principles or changing accounting principles may affect risks in preparing financial statements.

#### **Information System, Including the Related Business Processes, Relevant To Financial Reporting, And Communication**

5. An information system consists of infrastructure (physical and hardware components), software, people, procedures, and data. Many information systems make extensive use of information technology (IT).
6. The information system relevant to financial reporting objectives, which includes the financial reporting system, encompasses methods and records that:
  - ◆ Identify and record all valid transactions.

- ◆ Describe on a timely basis the transactions in sufficient detail to permit proper classification of transactions for financial reporting.
  - ◆ Measure the value of transactions in a manner that permits recording their proper monetary value in the financial statements.
  - ◆ Determine the time period in which transactions occurred to permit recording of transactions in the proper accounting period.
  - ◆ Present properly the transactions and related disclosures in the financial statements.
7. The quality of system-generated information affects management's ability to make appropriate decisions in managing and controlling the entity's activities and to prepare reliable financial reports.
8. Communication, which involves providing an understanding of individual roles and responsibilities pertaining to internal control over financial reporting, may take such forms as policy manuals, accounting and financial reporting manuals, and memoranda. Communication also can be made electronically, orally, and through the actions of management.

#### Control Activities

9. Generally, control activities that may be relevant to an audit may be categorised as policies and procedures that pertain to the following:
- ◆ *Performance reviews.* These control activities include reviews and analyses of actual performance versus budgets, forecasts, and prior period performance; relating different sets of data – operating or financial – to one another, together with analyses of the relationships and investigative and corrective actions; comparing internal data with external sources of information; and review of functional or activity performance.
  - ◆ *Information processing.* The two broad groupings of information systems control activities are application controls, which apply to the processing of individual applications, and general IT-controls, which are policies and procedures that relate to many applications and support the effective functioning of application controls by helping to ensure the continued proper operation of information systems. Examples of application controls include checking the arithmetical accuracy of records, maintaining and reviewing accounts and trial balances, automated controls such as edit checks of input data and numerical sequence checks, and manual follow-up of exception reports. Examples of general IT-controls are program change controls, controls that restrict access to programs or data, controls over the implementation of new releases of packaged software applications, and controls over system software that restrict access to or monitor the use of system utilities that could change financial data or records without leaving an audit trail.
  - ◆ *Physical controls.* Controls that encompass:
    - The physical security of assets, including adequate safeguards such as secured facilities over access to assets and records.
    - The authorisation for access to computer programs and data files.
    - The periodic counting and comparison with amounts shown on control records (for example, comparing the results of cash, security and inventory counts with accounting records).

The extent to which physical controls intended to prevent theft of assets are relevant to the reliability of financial statement preparation, and therefore the audit, depends on circumstances such as when assets are highly susceptible to misappropriation.
  - ◆ *Segregation of duties.* Assigning different people the responsibilities of authorising transactions,

recording transactions, and maintaining custody of assets. Segregation of duties is intended to reduce the opportunities to allow any person to be in a position to both perpetrate and conceal errors or fraud in the normal course of the person's duties.

10. Certain control activities may depend on the existence of appropriate higher level policies established by management or those charged with governance. For example, authorisation controls may be delegated under established guidelines, such as, investment criteria set by those charged with governance; alternatively, non-routine transactions such as, major acquisitions or divestments may require specific high level approval, including in some cases that of shareholders.

#### **Monitoring of Controls**

11. An important management responsibility is to establish and maintain internal control on an ongoing basis. Management's monitoring of controls includes considering whether they are operating as intended and that they are modified as appropriate for changes in conditions. Monitoring of controls may include activities such as, management's review of whether bank reconciliations are being prepared on a timely basis, internal auditors' evaluation of sales personnel's compliance with the entity's policies on terms of sales contracts, and a legal department's oversight of compliance with the entity's ethical or business practice policies. Monitoring is done also to ensure that controls continue to operate effectively over time. For example, if the timeliness and accuracy of bank reconciliations are not monitored, personnel are likely to stop preparing them.
12. Internal auditors or personnel performing similar functions may contribute to the monitoring of an entity's controls through separate evaluations. Ordinarily, they regularly provide information about the functioning of internal control, focusing considerable attention on evaluating the effectiveness of internal control, and communicate information about strengths and deficiencies in internal control and recommendations for improving internal control.
13. Monitoring activities may include using information from communications from external parties that may indicate problems or highlight areas in need of improvement. Customers implicitly corroborate billing data by paying their invoices or complaining about their charges. In addition, regulators may communicate with the entity concerning matters that affect the functioning of internal control, for example, communications concerning examinations by bank regulatory agencies. Also, management may consider communications relating to internal control from external auditors in performing monitoring activities.

## **Appendix 2**

(Ref: Para. A29 and A108)

#### **Conditions and Events that May Indicate Risks of Material Misstatement**

The following are examples of conditions and events that may indicate the existence of risks of material misstatement. The examples provided cover a broad range of conditions and events; however, not all conditions and events are relevant to every audit engagement and the list of examples is not necessarily complete.

- ◆ Operations in regions that are economically unstable, for example, countries with significant currency devaluation or highly inflationary economies.
- ◆ Operations exposed to volatile markets, for example, futures trading.
- ◆ Operations that are subject to a high degree of complex regulation.
- ◆ Going concern and liquidity issues including loss of significant customers.

- ◆ Constraints on the availability of capital and credit.
- ◆ Changes in the industry in which the entity operates.
- ◆ Changes in the supply chain.
- ◆ Developing or offering new products or services, or moving into new lines of business.
- ◆ Expanding into new locations.
- ◆ Changes in the entity such as large acquisitions or reorganisations or other unusual events.
- ◆ Entities or business segments likely to be sold.
- ◆ The existence of complex alliances and joint ventures.
- ◆ Use of off-balance-sheet finance, special-purpose entities, and other complex financing arrangements.
- ◆ Significant transactions with related parties.
- ◆ Lack of personnel with appropriate accounting and financial reporting skills.
- ◆ Changes in key personnel including departure of key executives.
- ◆ Deficiencies in internal control, especially those not addressed by management.
- ◆ Inconsistencies between the entity's IT strategy and its business strategies.
- ◆ Changes in the IT environment.
- ◆ Installation of significant new IT systems related to financial reporting.
- ◆ Inquiries into the entity's operations or financial results by regulatory or government bodies.
- ◆ Past misstatements, history of errors or a significant amount of adjustments at period end.
- ◆ Significant amount of non-routine or non-systematic transactions including intercompany transactions and large revenue transactions at period end.
- ◆ Transactions that are recorded based on management's intent, for example, debt refinancing, assets to be sold and classification of marketable securities.
- ◆ Application of new accounting pronouncements.
- ◆ Accounting measurements that involve complex processes.
- ◆ Events or transactions that involve significant measurement uncertainty, including accounting estimates.
- ◆ Pending litigation and contingent liabilities, for example, sales warranties, financial guarantees and environmental remediation.

## SA 320\*

# Materiality in Planning and Performing an Audit (Effective for all audits relating to accounting periods beginning on or after April 1, 2010)

---

### Introduction

#### Scope of this SA

1. This Standard on Auditing (SA) deals with the auditor's responsibility to apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing an audit of financial statements. SA 450<sup>1</sup>, explains how materiality is applied in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit and of uncorrected misstatements, if any, on the financial statements.

#### Materiality in the Context of an Audit

2. Financial reporting frameworks often discuss the concept of materiality in the context of the preparation and presentation of financial statements. Although financial reporting frameworks may discuss materiality in different terms, they generally explain that:
  - Misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements;
  - Judgments about materiality are made in the light of surrounding circumstances, and are affected by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both; and
  - Judgments about matters that are material to users of the financial statements are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group.<sup>2</sup> The possible effect of misstatements on specific individual users, whose needs may vary widely, is not considered.
3. Such a discussion, if present in the applicable financial reporting framework, provides a frame of reference to the auditor in determining materiality for the audit. If the applicable financial reporting framework does not include a discussion of the concept of materiality, the characteristics referred to in paragraph 2 provide the auditor with such a frame of reference.
4. The auditor's determination of materiality is a matter of professional judgment, and is affected by the auditor's perception of the financial information needs of users of the financial statements. In this context, it is reasonable for the auditor to assume that users:
  - (a) Have a reasonable knowledge of business and economic activities and accounting and a

---

\* Published in August, 2009 issue of the Journal.

<sup>1</sup> SA 450, "Evaluation of Misstatements Identified during the Audit".

<sup>2</sup> For example, paragraph 10 of the "Framework for the Preparation and Presentation of Financial Statements," issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) in July 2000, indicates for a profit-oriented entity that "as providers of risk capital to the enterprise, investor need more comprehensive information than other users. The provision of financial statements that meet their needs will also meet most of the needs of other users that financial statements can satisfy".

willingness to study the information in the financial statements with reasonable diligence;

- (b) Understand that financial statements are prepared, presented and audited to levels of materiality;
  - (c) Recognize the uncertainties inherent in the measurement of amounts based on the use of estimates, judgment and the consideration of future events; and
  - (d) Make reasonable economic decisions on the basis of the information in the financial statements.
5. The concept of materiality is applied by the auditor both in planning and performing the audit, and in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit and of uncorrected misstatements, if any, on the financial statements and in forming the opinion in the auditor's report. (Ref: Para. A1)
6. In planning the audit, the auditor makes judgments about the size of misstatements that will be considered material. These judgments provide a basis for:
- (a) Determining the nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures;
  - (b) Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement; and
  - (c) Determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures.

The materiality determined when planning the audit does not necessarily establish an amount below which uncorrected misstatements, individually or in aggregate, will always be evaluated as immaterial. The circumstances related to some misstatements may cause the auditor to evaluate them as material even if they are below materiality. Although, it is not practicable to design audit procedures to detect misstatements that could be material solely because of their nature, the auditor considers not only the size but also the nature of uncorrected misstatements, and the particular circumstances of their occurrence, when evaluating their effect on the financial statements.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Effective Date**

7. This SA is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after April 1, 2010.

#### **Objective**

8. The objective of the auditor is to apply the concept of materiality appropriately in planning and performing the audit.

#### **Definition**

9. For purposes of the SAs, performance materiality means the amount or amounts set by the auditor at less than materiality for the financial statements as a whole to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds materiality for the financial statements as a whole. If applicable, performance materiality also refers to the amount or amounts set by the auditor at less than the materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures.

#### **Requirements**

##### **Determining Materiality and Performance Materiality when Planning the Audit**

10. When establishing the overall audit strategy, the auditor shall determine materiality for the financial statements as a whole. If, in the specific circumstances of the entity, there is one or more particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than the materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements, the auditor shall also

---

<sup>3</sup> SA 450, paragraph A16.

determine the materiality level or levels to be applied to those particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures. (Ref: Para. A2-A11)

11. The auditor shall determine performance materiality for purposes of assessing the risks of material misstatement and determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures. (Ref: Para. A12)

**Revision as the Audit Progresses**

12. The auditor shall revise materiality for the financial statements as a whole (and, if applicable, the materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures) in the event of becoming aware of information during the audit that would have caused the auditor to have determined a different amount (or amounts) initially. (Ref: Para. A13)
13. If the auditor concludes that a lower materiality for the financial statements as a whole (and, if applicable, materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures) than that initially determined is appropriate, the auditor shall determine whether it is necessary to revise performance materiality, and whether the nature, timing and extent of the further audit procedures remain appropriate.

**Documentation**

14. The audit documentation shall include the following amounts and the factors considered in their determination:
  - (a) Materiality for the financial statements as a whole (see paragraph 10);
  - (b) If applicable, the materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures (see paragraph 10);
  - (c) Performance materiality (see paragraph 11); and
  - (d) Any revision of (a)-(c) as the audit progressed (see paragraphs 12-13).

**Application and Other Explanatory Material**

**Materiality and Audit Risk** (Ref: Para. 5)

- A1. In conducting an audit of financial statements, the overall objectives of the auditor are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, thereby enabling the auditor to express an opinion on whether the financial statements are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with an applicable financial reporting framework; and to report on the financial statements, and communicate as required by the SAs, in accordance with the auditor's findings.<sup>4</sup> The auditor obtains reasonable assurance by obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level<sup>5</sup>. Audit risk is the risk that the auditor expresses an inappropriate audit opinion when the financial statements are materially misstated. Audit risk is a function of the risks of material misstatement and detection risk<sup>6</sup>. Materiality and audit risk are considered throughout the audit, in particular, when:
  - (a) Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement<sup>7</sup>;

---

<sup>4</sup> SA 200, paragraph 11.

<sup>5</sup> SA 200, paragraph 17.

<sup>6</sup> SA 200, paragraph 13(c)

<sup>7</sup> SA 315, "Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatements Through Understanding the Entity and Its Environment".

- (b) Determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures<sup>8</sup>; and
- (c) Evaluating the effect of uncorrected misstatements, if any, on the financial statements and in forming the opinion in the auditor's report<sup>9</sup>.

**Determining Materiality and Performance Materiality when Planning the Audit** (Ref: Para. 10)

***Use of Benchmarks in Determining Materiality for the Financial Statements as a Whole***

- A2. Determining materiality involves the exercise of professional judgment. A percentage is often applied to a chosen benchmark as a starting point in determining materiality for the financial statements as a whole. Factors that may affect the identification of an appropriate benchmark include the following:
- The elements of the financial statements (for example, assets, liabilities, equity, revenue, expenses);
  - Whether there are items on which the attention of the users of the particular entity's financial statements tends to be focused (for example, for the purpose of evaluating financial performance users may tend to focus on profit, revenue or net assets);
  - The nature of the entity, where the entity is at in its life cycle, and the industry and economic environment in which the entity operates;
  - The entity's ownership structure and the way it is financed (for example, if an entity is financed solely by debt rather than equity, users may put more emphasis on assets, and claims on them, than on the entity's earnings); and
  - The relative volatility of the benchmark.
- A3. Examples of benchmarks that may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances of the entity, include categories of reported income such as profit before tax, total revenue, gross profit and total expenses, total equity or net asset value. Profit before tax from continuing operations is often used for profit-oriented entities. When profit before tax from continuing operations is volatile, other benchmarks may be more appropriate, such as gross profit or total revenues.
- A4. In relation to the chosen benchmark, relevant financial data ordinarily includes prior periods' financial results and financial positions, the period-to-date financial results and financial position, and budgets or forecasts for the current period, adjusted for significant changes in the circumstances of the entity (for example, a significant business acquisition) and relevant changes of conditions in the industry or economic environment in which the entity operates. For example, when, as a starting point, the materiality for the financial statements as a whole is determined for a particular entity based on a percentage of profit before tax from continuing operations, circumstances that give rise to an exceptional decrease or increase in such profit may lead the auditor to conclude that the materiality for the financial statements as a whole is more appropriately determined using a normalized profit before tax from continuing operations figure based on past results.
- A5. Materiality relates to the financial statements on which the auditor is reporting. Where the financial statements are prepared for a financial reporting period of more or less than twelve months, such as may be the case for a new entity or a change in the financial reporting period, materiality relates to the financial statements prepared for that financial reporting period.
- A6. Determining a percentage to be applied to a chosen benchmark involves the exercise of professional

<sup>8</sup> SA 330, "The Auditor's Responses to Assessed Risks".

<sup>9</sup> SA 700 (Revised), "Forming an Opinion and Reporting on Financial Statements".

judgment. There is a relationship between the percentage and the chosen benchmark, such that a percentage applied to profit before tax from continuing operations will normally be higher than a percentage applied to total revenue. For example, the auditor may consider five percent of profit before tax from continuing operations to be appropriate for a profit oriented entity in a manufacturing industry, while the auditor may consider one percent of total revenue or total expenses to be appropriate for a not-for-profit entity. Higher or lower percentages, however, may be deemed appropriate in different circumstances.

*Considerations Specific to Small Entities*

- A7. When an entity's profit before tax from continuing operations is consistently nominal, as might be the case for an owner-managed business where the owner takes much of the profit before tax in the form of remuneration, a benchmark such as profit before remuneration and tax may be more relevant.
- A8. In the case of certain entities, such as, Central/State governments and related government entities (for example, agencies, boards, commissions), legislators and regulators are often the primary users of its financial statements. Furthermore, the financial statements may be used to make decisions other than economic decisions. The determination of materiality for the financial statements as a whole (and, if applicable, materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures) in an audit of the financial statements of those entities may therefore be influenced by legislative and regulatory requirements, and by the financial information needs of legislators and the public in relation to public utility programs/projects, such as, Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) undertaken by the Central/State governments or related government entities .
- A9. In an audit of the entities doing public utility programs/projects, total cost or net cost (expenses less revenues or expenditure less receipts) may be appropriate benchmarks for that particular program/project activity. Where an entity has custody of the assets, assets may be an appropriate benchmark.

**Materiality Level or Levels for Particular Classes of Transactions, Account Balances or Disclosures**  
(Ref: Para. 10)

- A10. Factors that may indicate the existence of one or more particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements include the following:
- Whether law, regulations or the applicable financial reporting framework affect users' expectations regarding the measurement or disclosure of certain items (for example, related party transactions, and the remuneration of management and those charged with governance).
  - The key disclosures in relation to the industry in which the entity operates (for example, research and development costs for a pharmaceutical company).
  - Whether attention is focused on a particular aspect of the entity's business that is separately disclosed in the financial statements (for example, a newly acquired business).
- A11. In considering whether, in the specific circumstances of the entity, such classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures exist, the auditor may find it useful to obtain an understanding of the views and expectations of those charged with governance and management.

**Performance Materiality** (Ref: Para. 11)

- A12. Planning the audit solely to detect individually material misstatements overlooks the fact that the aggregate of individually immaterial misstatements may cause the financial statements to be materially misstated, and leaves no margin for possible undetected misstatements. Performance materiality (which, as defined,

is one or more amounts) is set to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements in the financial statements exceeds materiality for the financial statements as a whole. Similarly, performance materiality relating to a materiality level determined for a particular class of transactions, account balance or disclosure is set to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements in that particular class of transactions, account balance or disclosure exceeds the materiality level for that particular class of transactions, account balance or disclosure. The determination of performance materiality is not a simple mechanical calculation and involves the exercise of professional judgment. It is affected by the auditor's understanding of the entity, updated during the performance of the risk assessment procedures; and the nature and extent of misstatements identified in previous audits and thereby the auditor's expectations in relation to misstatements in the current period.

**Revision as the Audit Progresses** (Ref: Para. 12)

- A13. Materiality for the financial statements as a whole (and, if applicable, the materiality level or levels for particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures) may need to be revised as a result of a change in circumstances that occurred during the audit (for example, a decision to dispose of a major part of the entity's business), new information, or a change in the auditor's understanding of the entity and its operations as a result of performing further audit procedures. For example, if during the audit it appears as though actual financial results are likely to be substantially different from the anticipated period end financial results that were used initially to determine materiality for the financial statements as a whole, the auditor revises that materiality.

**Material Modifications to ISA 320, "Materiality in Planning and Performing an Audit"**

**Deletions**

1. Paragraph A2 of ISA 320 dealt with the determination of materiality for the financial statements as a whole or for particular assertion in an audit of financial statements of a public sector entity, which is influenced by legislative and regulatory requirements, and by the financial information needs of legislators and the public in relation to public sector programs. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that such a specific situation may exist in case of Central/State governments or related government entities, or programs/projects launched by them, pursuant to a requirement under the statute or regulation under which they operate. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A2, highlighting such fact, has been retained and the paragraph has been re-numbered as A8.

2. Paragraph A9 of ISA 320 states that in an audit of the public sector entities, total cost or net cost (expenses less revenues or expenditure less receipts) may be appropriate benchmarks for program/project activities. Where a public sector entity has custody of assets, assets may be an appropriate benchmark. Since as mentioned in the "Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services", the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted.

Further, it is also possible that such a specific situation may exist in case of Central/State governments or related government entities, or programs/projects launched by them, pursuant to a requirement under the statute or regulation under which they operate. Accordingly, the spirit of erstwhile A9, highlighting such fact, has been retained.