



IRCA/470 Briefing Note:

CPD programmes for Corporate Management System Auditor (CMSA) Certification

Scope:

This document;

1. Outlines the broad training and development activities which can contribute to the achievement and maintenance of CMSA certification.
2. Outlines how these activities can contribute to working as an auditor at corporate level.
3. Identifies the type of evidence which, in conjunction with a CPD plan, would verify the achievement of appropriate CPD and its effectiveness in enhancing the required competencies.

1.0 Introduction

The CMSA auditor grade is a premium certification grade for those auditors who can demonstrate exceptionally high levels of auditor competence. It is primarily applicable to those auditors who routinely conduct and manage audits of large, highly complex organisations to which they can add value by helping corporate management to meet their business objectives and identify significant opportunities for improvement.

As a competency based scheme, CMSA certification is relevant to auditors working in any field or sector and complies with ISO 17024 under agreed personnel certification standards for this grade.

The CPD programmes covered in this briefing note are applicable both to auditors wishing to achieve CMSA certification and for the ongoing maintenance of certification. They are based on the eight competencies to be satisfactorily demonstrated for certification although it is recognised that some programmes may overlap several of these competencies. Please note however that this briefing note is not specifying a requirement for the completion of training courses, as there are no pre-requisites requirements for the Corporate Auditor Programme.

2.0 Competency - Understanding the Business

In addition to a basic familiarity with the relevant business sector, the CMSA auditor requires to have a good understanding of the organisation's ethos, business strategies and objectives, stakeholder interests, relevant regulatory framework and market conditions as well as the management and operation of the products, services and processes involved. Top management personnel at the corporate level will usually have gained their position by the demonstration of superlative skill and experience in their relevant field. CMSA auditors need to demonstrate that



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they have taken adequate steps to obtain sufficient understanding of the business environment in order to gain credibility with corporate management and thereby facilitate an effective audit outcome.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Post-secondary education in business-related studies such as business administration or management studies at degree or diploma level qualifications. Such programmes will create a foundation of business understanding on which an appreciation of specific business issues can be built.
2. Training courses in specific management level subjects such as strategic business planning, budgetary control, marketing and business development, human resource management, health and safety management and business risk management.
3. Conferences and seminar presentations on subjects such as business excellence, quality management strategies, regulatory developments, outsourcing strategies etc.
4. Attendance at meetings organised by professional bodies such as CQI (Quality and related issues), IEMA (Environment and related issues), CIPD (personnel development) and generic business associations such as Chambers of Commerce, Productivity Institutes, Business Confederations etc.
5. Self study of business sector publications such as those by trade organisations and professional institutes as well as in-house corporate publications and on-line information magazines.
6. Membership and participation in on-line forums and special interest groups (SIGs) for business issues.
7. Research projects for presentations of business topics to peer groups or other organisations, including research conducted as part of consultancy provision.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, listings of publication subscriptions, listings of web addresses accessed and textbook titles used as well as meeting minutes and letters of commendation. The effectiveness of the CPD can be determined by the successful application of new competencies in the conduct of projects and assignments such as complex audits.

3.0 Competency – Plan the Audit

Corporate management will usually place a high premium on effective planning. Much of the involvement of top management on a daily basis is related to forward planning of the section of the business for which they are responsible. The ability to plan an audit is a basic auditor competency but the specific requirement for CMSA grade is audit planning which takes account of the most significant risks to achieving business objectives, meeting customer and stakeholder expectations and compliance with regulatory requirements. This competence must be demonstrated within the context of an audit which could involve several management system



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standards, several different site locations, the need for technical expertise and the involvement of several auditors over a number of days.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as strategic business planning, logistics management, project management, time management, emergency planning and preparedness, risk management etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations on subjects such as Just In Time Methods, Lean Manufacturing, Six Sigma Techniques, FMEA Techniques etc.
3. Involvement in consultancy or training projects containing a strong planning focus such as IT development projects, quality planning projects, construction management projects etc.
4. Self study of business publications on project management and planning such as those by trade organisations and professional institutes as well as in-house corporate publications and on-line magazines.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, project records, listings of publication subscriptions, listings of web addresses accessed and textbook titles referenced. Application for CMSA grade requires the submission of a complex audit plan along with a description of the rationale behind the plan. Such a plan could form part of the evidence of CPD relating to this competency. Renewal of CMSA certification requires the development and implementation of a CPD plan. The effectiveness of the CPD can be determined by the successful completion of projects and assignments including complex audits leading to desired outcomes.

Competency – Leading, Organising and Directing the Audit Team

By definition, corporate management occupies a leadership role within an organisation. Most members of top management will have direct experience of leading, organising and directing their own teams from an executive standpoint. While leading, organising and directing teams is a normal key function of a lead auditor, the CMSA auditor needs to demonstrate these competencies when leading audits which present a stronger than normal challenge to their team leadership competence. Corporate managers working with CMSA auditors will likely expect the auditor to demonstrate the level of leadership and organisational skills which roughly equates to their own abilities in this area.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as team leadership, managing people, decision making, conflict management, facilitation and coaching skills etc.



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2. Conferences and seminar presentations by business leaders and leaders in other fields where they have clearly demonstrated outstanding leadership etc.
3. Participation in personal development vehicles such as residential outdoor training schools, psychometric testing schemes, mentoring plans, business leader programmes etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on leadership, team working and team development.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. The effectiveness of the CPD can be substantiated by career developments involving roles such as team leader, lead auditor, head of department etc.

5.0 Competency – Manage the Audit Process

Managerial ability in complex audit situations needs to be demonstrated by the CMSA auditor in addition to the leadership skills outlined in the previous competency. This competency relates to successfully working with all stakeholders in an audit process in order to deliver an outcome which fully meets the audit objectives. Demonstration of this competency involves coordination and monitoring of team activities in line with the audit plan for a complex audit, resolving audit problems, timely decision making to effect any necessary changes, reporting progress to corporate management and sharing information across the team.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as managing people, decision making, conflict management, team facilitation, stress management, problem solving, management of change, human resource management etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations by management associations and management consultancy groups on management issues such as creative thinking, information skills, efficiency planning, employment law etc.
3. Participation in personal development vehicles such as management training programmes, negotiation skills, coaching skills etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on management strategy and communication skills.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. Evidence of the effectiveness of the CPD may lie in career progression involving roles such as function team leader, lead auditor, managerial promotion etc.



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6.0 Competency – Gather Audit Evidence

Gathering evidence is a basic competency for any auditor at any level. Obtaining factual information as a basis for conformity assessment is standard audit practice. For CMSA auditors, this competency requires demonstration of the ability to consistently identify and acquire key factual data using a variety of appropriate techniques based on risk-based sampling of the relevant elements of complex processes. This will involve paying close attention to detail, following clear and logical audit trails, making effective use of audit tools such as self-compiled process checklists and working comfortably with people at all levels in the organisation. This competency will also require effective data analysis of the evidence found and the application of reasoned judgement in determining likely consequences. The auditor's focus at corporate level will embrace broad audit objectives and will contain a system wide perspective which includes continual improvement processes.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as advanced auditing techniques, assertiveness, communication skills, interviewing techniques, presentation skills, critical path analysis, root cause analysis etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations on life skills topics, innovation and creativity, media skills etc.
3. Participation in consultancy projects or studies involving research into processes such as system gap analysis, environmental risk assessments, safety risk analysis, accident investigations, fault finding methods etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on listening skills, public speaking, personality development programmes, memory fitness programmes etc.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. The effectiveness of the CPD may be witnessed in the successful conduct of projects and assignments such as information surveys, performance appraisals, contract reviews etc. Results of audits/findings are related to their potential or actual impact of the business and/or stakeholders.

7.0 Competency – Evaluate Findings and Draw Appropriate Conclusions

Regardless of the stringency with which evidence may be gathered, the audit process will be compromised if the auditor cannot accurately recognize the significance of such evidence in relation to the audit objectives. For CMSA auditors, this competency would be demonstrated through a high level of awareness of those factors which impact on the reliability of the audit



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findings, working out the actual or potential impact of the findings on the system, deriving informed conclusions as to the effectiveness of the system and recognising opportunities for adding value throughout the audit process. A strong display of this competency at corporate level would normally result in a meaningful audit outcome for all stakeholders in the audit.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as advanced auditing techniques, critical path analysis, root cause analysis, FMEA techniques, risk management etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations on statistical techniques, data analysis techniques, lateral thinking, operational planning etc.
3. Participation in management or operational studies involving investigations or inquiries to determine situational causes and production of recommendations for action etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on the subject matter outlined above including corporate governance etc.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. Evidence of the effectiveness of the CPD may be determined by the successful conduct of projects and assignments including complex audits, successful investigations and strategic reviews e.g. business planning and objective setting.

8.0 Competency – Communication

The ability to communicate effectively is a prerequisite for successful auditing practice. This relates to both verbal and written communication skills within the audit team and externally. When auditing in the corporate context, CMSA auditors need to demonstrate two-way communication skills which are highly effective and conducted using appropriate language skills which relate to the relevant audit environment. All communication should be conducted confidently, with a constructive attitude which seeks to engender a good understanding of issues between the parties and leads to positive outcomes for the organisation. Written communications should be objective, structured, concise, comprehensive and balanced.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency;

1. Training courses in subjects such as presentation skills, communication skills, report writing, negotiation skills, active listening and public speaking, media skills, essay writing etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations on persuasion techniques e.g. sales training, effective listening, interviewing techniques etc.



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3. Preparation for and participation in media events such as presentations, debates, training course deliveries etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on public speaking, presentation skills and on-line self improvement courses etc.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. The effectiveness of the CPD may be demonstrated by successfully undertaking communication roles, publishing articles or books and participating in complex team audits.

9.0 Competency – Adapting and Coping

Every auditor has to find the correct balance between being over-assertive and over-collaborative. The balance point will vary depending on the audit environment and the different management styles encountered. The CMSA auditor must demonstrate suitable flexibility in changing audit situations, be open to new ideas and techniques, be able to resolve ambiguity using objective means, work productively under pressure and maintain self-control, particularly in adverse circumstances. The corporate environment can place the CMSA auditor under greater than normal stress particularly in situations where the audit outcome will have significant implications for the organisation. In meeting this competency, the auditor should be able to deliver the audit objectives in a professional manner which will gain the respect of corporate management as well as the members of the audit team.

Typical CPD programmes relating to this competency ;

1. Training courses in subjects such as stress management, emotional intelligence, managing difficult people, time management, prioritisation skills etc.
2. Conferences and seminar presentations on relaxation techniques, developing a positive mental attitude, motivation techniques etc.
3. Participation in personal development workshops, psychometric testing, personality profiling, anger management programmes etc.
4. Self study of publications and textbooks on mental fitness, negotiation techniques, etc.

Evidence relating to CPD for this competency can be found in training and qualification certificates, attendance logs, personal development records, listings of publications and textbook titles referenced. The effectiveness of the CPD may be proven by successfully meeting project deadlines, delivering objectives and achieving goals in difficult circumstances.



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Conclusion

Although the above CPD activities may contribute to the development of the competences required for the CMSA grade, they are unlikely to be the sole means of achieving these competencies. Since competence is defined as "demonstrated ability", a demonstration of competence necessitates practical application of the background education, training, skill and experience of the candidate. The competences involved in the CMSA grade are unlikely to be gained through training alone but will accrue over time through a process of continual development based on practical application. The IRCA Assessment Centre provides the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their readiness for the award of the CMSA grade through an assessment of the level of achievement in each competency.

When considering their readiness for an initial application, candidates may wish to seek independent verification of the relevant competences through peer review or other objective evaluation process which could provide guidance as to readiness. Should a candidate be unsuccessful either in being presented for the Assessment Centre or after attending, IRCA provides a comprehensive individual report which identifies areas for further CPD opportunities.