

PER

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

CONTENTS

1 THE BASICS

- 1.1 What is ACCA's practical experience requirement (PER)?
- 1.2 What do I have to do?
- 1.3 Why is the PER important?

2 MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 How do I get the right type of experience?
- 2.2 What are performance objectives?
- 2.3 What are challenge questions?
- 2.4 What is a workplace mentor?
- 2.5 Who can be my workplace mentor?
- 2.6 What is a training supervisor?
- 2.7 How do I get my employer to support my PER?
- 2.8 What is ACCA's Approved Employer exemption from the trainee development matrix (TDM)?
- 2.9 What if I am studying full time?
- 2.10 What if I want a practising certificate in the future?
- 2.11 Why do I need to make an annual PER return?
- 2.12 What is a PER audit?

3 GETTING STARTED

- 3.1 What is the trainee development matrix (TDM)?
- 3.2 How do I follow the PER process?
- 3.3 Which performance objectives should I attempt first?
- 3.4 How do I answer challenge questions?
- 3.5 How does a workplace mentor use the TDM?
- 3.6 How often should I update my TDM?
- 3.7 Help me – where do I start?

01 THE BASICS

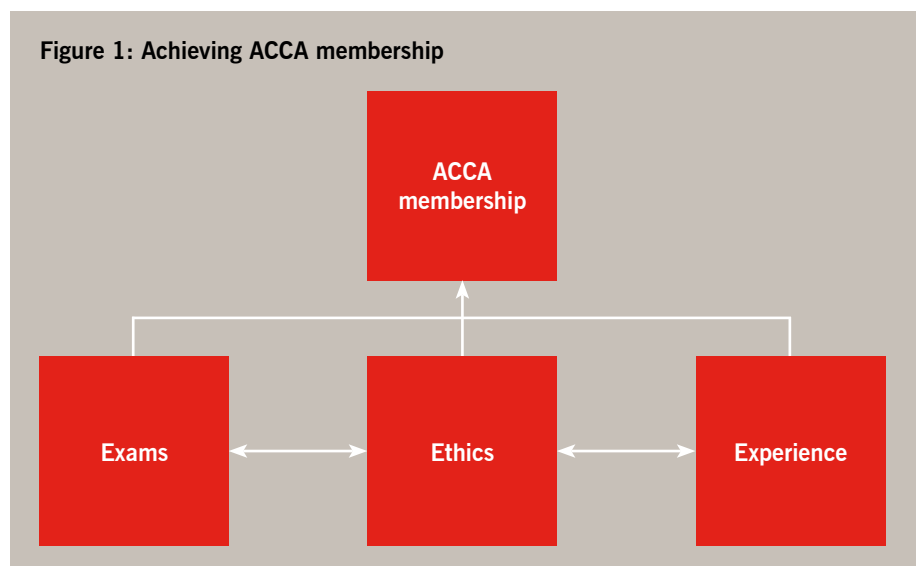
1.1 WHAT IS ACCA'S PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT (PER)?

ACCA's practical experience requirement (PER) is a key component of the ACCA Qualification. To become an ACCA member all trainees – students and affiliates – must successfully complete:

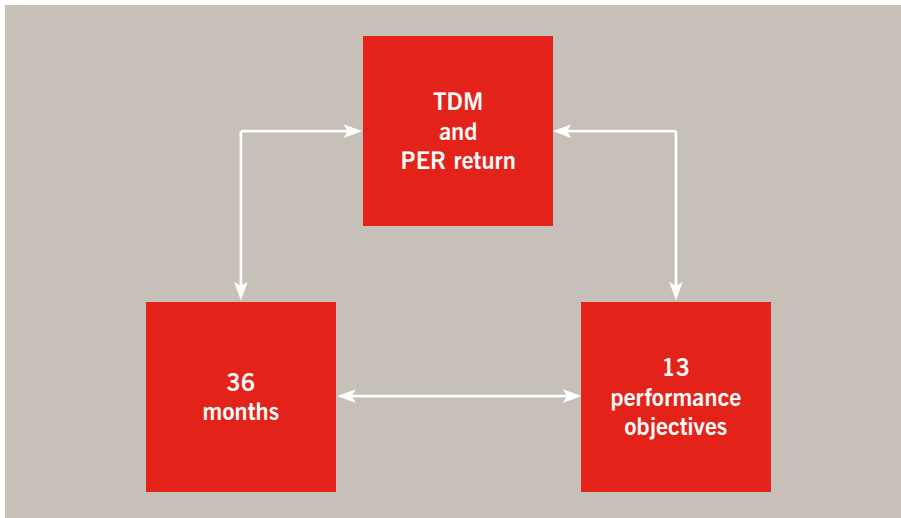
- the ACCA exams
- the Professional Ethics Module*
- the practical experience requirement.

* Trainees registered with ACCA before 1 January 2007 are not required to complete the Professional Ethics Module, although completion of the module is recommended.

Figure 1: Achieving ACCA membership



ACCA's PER is based on the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) International Education Standard 5, Practical Experience Requirements. ACCA's PER develops trainees' professional knowledge and values, ethics and attitudes required to perform their work with professional competence.



1.2 WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

There are four components to the PER:

- achieve nine (9) Essentials and at least four (4) Options performance objectives (making a total of 13 or more) to the satisfaction of your workplace mentor
- record and report your PER progress through the trainee development matrix (TDM)*
- complete 36 months' experience in one or more accounting or finance-related roles
- make a PER return each year.

Performance objectives are indicators of effective performance in your work activities as a trainee accountant. They also outline the values and attitudes you should demonstrate as you fulfil your PER. See section 2.2 for more information.

Use the trainee development matrix (TDM) to track and record your achievement of the performance objectives*. This can be accessed via *myACCA*.

Try to get your employer's support to help you gain the PER. You will also need to work closely with your workplace mentor.

* Unless your employer is a Gold or Platinum Approved Employer and they have taken advantage of the TDM exemption (see section 2.8).

1.3 WHY IS THE PER IMPORTANT?

In order to perform effectively as an ACCA-qualified accountant, and to help you meet future career challenges, you need to develop your skills in the workplace as well as passing the exams. The PER helps you to:

- apply in practice the knowledge and techniques gained through your studies towards the ACCA exams
- observe and be involved in real-life work situations that help you to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that a qualified accountant needs
- develop your judgment, encouraging you to reflect on the quality of your work and how you may improve your work performance in the future.

The PER helps you to prove that you have the relevant professional skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required of a qualified accountant. It sets you a range of performance objectives to achieve and ensures you gain enough experience in one or more relevant roles to show that you have the abilities and maturity required to become a member.

Employers expect ACCA members to show high levels of knowledge and ability in the workplace, and to behave ethically. PER enables you to confirm your effective and sustained high-quality workplace performance, making you a more valuable employee.

TIP BOX

Visit *myACCA* for some real-life trainee and mentor PER case studies

02

MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 HOW DO I GET THE RIGHT TYPE OF EXPERIENCE?

ACCA trainees work in every sector and size of organisation. Wherever you work, it is important to look for the opportunities to help you meet your PER and to obtain 36 months' experience in a relevant role, or roles. Ideally, you should have a job where most of your time is spent on activities and tasks related to accounting, finance, audit and assurance, or in other related technical areas such as taxation, insolvency, and forensic accounting.

Even so, if your job includes only a small amount of accountancy and finance work it can count as long as you record pro rata the time you spend on these activities. For example, if only a quarter of your working time during the year is spent working on accounting or finance tasks, you may only claim three months as relevant time in your PER annual return.

You can use experience from previous roles to help you claim a performance objective, including experience gained before registering with ACCA. The person who supervised your work at that time must be able to review and sign off the answers to your challenge questions (refer to section 2.3 for more information about challenge questions). To do this, he or she will need to be registered as a workplace mentor on the TDM. You can also use experience gained before registration to count towards the 36-month requirement.

You may start in a junior role but you should aim to have more responsibility and accountability over time. Examples include when:

- you are promoted
- your job changes in some way
- you move to a different organisation to allow you to take on increasing levels of responsibility and accountability.

To make progress, you should actively plan your career, setting yourself goals, which should include the types of jobs you would like to do.

When you actively seek to progress and develop your career to meet the PER, you will also demonstrate to your employer the value of supporting you to gain your ACCA Qualification.

2.2 WHAT ARE PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES?

Performance objectives are ACCA's indicators of effective performance, and set the minimum standard of work that you are expected to achieve and demonstrate in the workplace. They describe the kinds of work activity you may carry out and the values and attitudes you are expected to have and to demonstrate as a trainee accountant. They also include information about the work outcomes you must produce and the quality of your work. For example, you may be asked to develop a project plan that meets your organisation's standards.

If you have ever taken part in a performance management or appraisal process at work, you may find ACCA's performance objectives are similar in structure to those work-related objectives and expectations agreed by you and your manager.

You are required to achieve at least 13 performance objectives in total – all nine Essentials performance objectives and, a minimum of, any four Options performance objectives.

The performance objectives are all closely linked to the exam syllabus, reinforcing your understanding that any knowledge developed through the exam process will have a clear application in the workplace.

Essentials performance objectives focus on: professionalism, ethics and governance; personal effectiveness; and business management.

Options performance objectives focus on technical areas: financial accounting and reporting; performance measurement and management accounting; finance and financial management; audit and assurance; and taxation.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

ESSENTIALS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES – COMPLETE ALL NINE

Professionalism, ethics and governance

- 1 Demonstrate the application of professional ethics, values and judgement
- 2 Contribute to the effective governance of an organisation
- 3 Raise awareness of non-financial risk

Personal effectiveness

- 4 Manage self
- 5 Communicate effectively
- 6 Use information and communications technology

Business management

- 7 Manage ongoing activities in your area of responsibility
- 8 Improve departmental performance
- 9 Manage an assignment

OPTIONS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES – CHOOSE ANY FOUR

Financial accounting and reporting

- 10 Prepare financial statements for external purposes
- 11 Interpret financial transactions and financial statements

Performance measurement and management accounting

- 12 Prepare financial information for management
- 13 Contribute to budget planning and production
- 14 Monitor and control budgets

Finance and financial management

- 15 Evaluate potential business/investment opportunities and the required finance options
- 16 Manage cash using active cash management and treasury systems

Audit and assurance

- 17 Prepare for and collect evidence for audit
- 18 Evaluate and report on audit

Taxation

- 19 Evaluate and compute taxes payable
- 20 Assist with tax planning

The TDM includes detailed information on each performance objective.

SCREEN 1: VIEW PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE DETAILS – ACTIVITIES

The performance objectives section in the TDM gives information designed to help you achieve each objective successfully (see Screen 1). In the section on 'Activities' you will find examples of work activities that you might carry out, and that could help you work towards achieving the performance objective. The activities listed are not the only ones; they do not prescribe the work you must do but will give you some ideas.

SCREEN 2: VIEW PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE DETAILS – PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

It is important to familiarise yourself with the 'Performance Indicators' section (see Screen 2). This describes the work outcomes you must show, the behaviours and values you are expected to demonstrate, the level of quality you must achieve, and the contribution your work must make. These indicators do not cover everything, but are important guidelines for you and your workplace mentor when considering whether you have met the requirements of the performance objective.

SCREEN 3: VIEW PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE DETAILS – KNOWLEDGE

The 'Knowledge' section (Screen 3) acts as a reminder of the knowledge you should be using when working towards the performance objective.

SCREEN 4: VIEW PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE DETAILS – RELATED EXAMS

Each performance objective is linked to an exam paper (Screen 4). Pursuing linked exams and performance objectives will allow you to put into practice what you are learning, and help you to structure your study and training more effectively. In summary, performance objectives:

- describe the work outcomes, values and attitudes you should demonstrate as you fulfil your PER
- provide a link to the exams by reinforcing the application of knowledge developed through your studies
- are divided into Essentials and Options.

SCREEN 5: CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

2.3 WHAT ARE CHALLENGE QUESTIONS?

The PER is intended to help you develop your judgment and reflect on the quality of your work and what you might need to do to improve your work performance in the future.

The challenge questions are there to help you do this by showing that you can analyse the quality and value of your work, and see where you may continue to improve. They also help you to summarise your work activity so that your workplace mentor can evaluate whether you have achieved the standard required by the individual performance objective.

Each performance objective has three unique challenge questions attached to it.

Challenge questions (Screen 5) are not tests or exams that have to be passed. They are similar to questions you may be asked as part of a performance review or appraisal at work. Therefore, your answers to the challenge questions

should give your workplace mentor and employer valuable information about your achievement and contribution at work.

Challenge questions are designed to:

- allow you to describe your experience in a structured way
- enable you to illustrate any unusual or individual circumstances that you might have encountered, as well as to describe how these were taken into account or how you overcame any difficulties
- allow you to show that you have thought about the quality of your work and reflected on your performance and achievement in the workplace
- help provide evidence about your performance that your workplace mentor can review.

Your completed answer to each challenge question should be no more than 500

words in length. Your answers can provide you with a basis for talking with your workplace mentor about the experience that has contributed to the achievement of each performance objective.

2.4 WHAT IS A WORKPLACE MENTOR?

A workplace mentor is a person who supports your development in the workplace and reviews your progress and achievements at work, and so plays an important role in the achievement of your PER. Your workplace mentor should guide and support you in the following ways:

- The mentor can help you to identify which performance objectives you should aim to achieve, and the date by which you should achieve them.
- The mentor can help you plan the experience needed to achieve targeted performance objectives, for example by helping you to arrange job rotations, project work, or other opportunities to gain relevant experience.
- The mentor can help you identify any personal development needed to achieve the necessary level of workplace performance required by the performance objective, and how you might get that development. For example, you may need to improve your report writing or communication skills. Your workplace mentor may recommend appropriate training, research, or practice in this area. He or she may also provide you with some on-the-job training or coaching, or find someone else to help you develop these skills. You could use the development plan (see section 3.7) in the TDM to help you plan this activity, evaluating your progress on a regular basis.
- The mentor will also review your answers to your challenge questions (see section 3.5 for more information) and sign off your experience and the performance objective as soon as you both agree that you have met the standard required.

It is your responsibility to find a workplace mentor.

2.5 WHO CAN BE MY WORKPLACE MENTOR?



The workplace mentor:

- should ideally be a qualified accountant recognised by law in your country and/ or a member of an IFAC body
- must have knowledge of your work.

Your workplace mentor should be someone with whom you work closely, who knows the type of work you are doing now, and who also knows the quality of your work. Ideally this will be your line manager, or the person to whom you report on particular projects or activities.

You may have more than one workplace mentor, or several different workplace mentors over a period of time, each of whom is responsible for helping you to achieve a different performance objective. For example, you may report directly to your line manager who will be able to help you with Performance Objective 5, Communicate Effectively, but you may also be working closely on a project with another colleague who may be able to support you on Performance Objective 9, Manage an Assignment.

It is important that your workplace mentor has the knowledge and experience to support you. Your mentor will be assessing whether you have met performance objectives so it is crucial that you choose somebody with the expertise to do this.

TIP BOX

Explore the trainee development matrix (TDM), in *myACCA*. It includes detailed information on each performance objective

If you work for a small organisation, or are the most senior finance person in the organisation, or your organisation does not employ a professionally qualified accountant who can act as your workplace mentor, you could, as a last resort, consider the following options:

- Are there any consultants or external contacts – not necessarily employees – who know your work, are qualified accountants, and could act as your workplace mentor? For example,

your organisation may have external accountants, or the organisation's auditor might be willing to fulfil this role – but make sure they do not feel there is any conflict of interest if they agree to do this.

- It might be that someone who is part-qualified could act as your workplace mentor. Such a person will still need relevant expertise and knowledge of your work.
- Is there someone else in your organisation who has relevant expertise and knowledge of your work? Ideally, this should be someone with a related or relevant professional or postgraduate qualification. For example, to support you on Performance Objective 8, Improve Departmental Performance, you may find someone who has an MBA.

You should always avoid having a friend or relative as your workplace mentor, to prevent any potential conflicts of interest.

If your workplace mentor is not qualified (see section 2.4) you will need to find a training supervisor who is qualified.

2.6 WHAT IS A TRAINING SUPERVISOR?

If the workplace mentor is not a professional accountant recognised by law in your country and/or a member of an IFAC body, a training supervisor who is so recognised should countersign the successful attainment of the performance objective.

A training supervisor does not fulfil a mentor's role but will confirm the successful attainment of the performance objective if your workplace mentor is not qualified.

Training supervisors do not have access to the online TDM to review and sign off your achievements. Instead, you will need to give your supervisor a paper copy of your challenge questions and answers as well as the sign-off form – which you or your workplace mentor can print from the online TDM. You must keep the signed-off forms in case you are selected for a PER audit (see section 2.12).

You or your workplace mentor must enter the details of your training supervisor into the TDM, and record when the supervisor has signed off a performance objective.

2.7 HOW DO I GET MY EMPLOYER TO SUPPORT MY PER?

When you are thinking about completing your practical experience, you should make sure you are able to explain – to both your employer and your potential workplace mentor – the numerous benefits that will result as you achieve your performance objectives. For example, you will develop personal effectiveness skills in areas such as communication and time management. There are also personal benefits for your workplace mentor, because the mentoring role may contribute to the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of his or her own professional body.

TIP BOX

Go to the students' section of www.accaglobal.com to download a copy of *Becoming a workplace mentor* for your mentor.

Achieving your PER will be much easier if you receive guidance and support from your employer. To gain this, you may need to explain how the organisation will benefit from supporting your training towards the ACCA Qualification. You may wish to mention that:

- your training and development in the workplace, alongside your ACCA studies, will improve your overall workplace performance; it will allow your knowledge and skills to develop together, making you more effective in your role and ready to take on more demanding activities
- a better-trained employee can be more effective, quicker to learn new skills, and more able to respond to changing demands
- your employer will be gaining a qualified professional accountant at the end of your development period – someone who is committed to continuing to learn and improve their performance.

It is also a good idea to tell your employer how to save time by combining some of your PER activities with the organisation's human resources (HR) systems and practices. Doing this will benefit your employer, as ACCA's PER is designed to fit in with organisational target setting, review, and appraisal processes. Here are some examples of suggestions you could make.

- Your performance objectives could be embedded into your work, or business-related objectives. So when you are setting your work objectives, try and agree the performance objectives you could work towards at the same time.
- At your performance review or appraisal, explain the performance objectives you have achieved since your last review to illustrate your progress, and show how these have contributed to your improved work performance. Also, your answers to challenge questions could be evaluated or used when talking about your workplace performance.
- When you and your manager are setting development goals and thinking about the training or skills you need to develop, you can also think about the development that will help you achieve your PER.

ACCA has produced a guide that trainees can download and give to potential workplace mentors, explaining the reasons for taking on the role. Visit the 'PER support' section of www.accaglobal.com to download a copy.

2.8 WHAT IS ACCA'S APPROVED EMPLOYER EXEMPTION FROM THE TDM?

ACCA formally recognises the training and development support that employers provide to ACCA trainees.

TIP BOX

We recommend that you start to plan your search for a relevant role prior to leaving full-time study. Visit the careers sections of www.accaglobal.com for a range of resources and support, including career management, to help you to start planning your career.

If your employer is a Gold or Platinum ACCA Approved Employer – trainee development stream, you may be exempt from using the TDM to record and report achievement of your performance objectives. This is because ACCA recognises that your employer already has a robust training and development programme in place. It is important to confirm that your employer has this level of approval and whether they want you to claim the TDM exemption.

Please note that it is your employer – not you – who decides whether you can claim exemption from using the TDM for recording the achievement of performance objectives. And even if your employer agrees you can claim TDM exemption, you will still need to submit your annual PER return.

When you leave the employment of a Gold or Platinum Approved Employer where the TDM exemption has been applied, you should ensure you complete the 'Approved Employer PER summary form' (available from www.accaglobal.com). Record on the form how long you have worked for the organisation, and describe the performance objectives you have achieved while you worked there.

2.9 WHAT IF I AM STUDYING FULL TIME?

The PER is essential to achieving your ACCA Qualification. Without it you cannot apply for membership. Although we recommend that you complete your exams while gaining your practical experience, we realise that many trainees prefer to study for their exams on a full-time basis before gaining their relevant experience. If you are studying full time you may not be able to gain any relevant experience

or achieve any performance objectives, but you will still need to complete a PER annual return each year (see section 2.11). If you have any previous work experience, whether on a part-time or voluntary basis, a work placement or internship – and any of the work undertaken was relevant – then it may be counted towards your PER. You will need to find a workplace mentor, who knew your work at the time, to sign off your performance objectives.

Even if you did not achieve any performance objectives from your previous work, you can count time spent in a previous relevant role towards the 36-months' requirement.

2.10 WHAT IF I WANT A PRACTISING CERTIFICATE IN THE FUTURE?

As a trainee you are not able to undertake work within ACCA's definition of public practice¹. You are allowed to provide basic bookkeeping services, undertake payroll and VAT work, and record basic accounting records to trial balance stage. Note that if you are self-employed, and provide these services directly to the public, this cannot contribute towards the three years' relevant experience required for your PER.

ACCA issues a practising certificate as well as a practising certificate and audit qualification. Practising certificates are available only to ACCA members, and to obtain one you need to do a number of things – including completing a period of relevant post-membership work experience with an ACCA Approved Employer – practising certificate development stream.

An ACCA practising certificate and audit qualification is issued only for the UK, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man, the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Zimbabwe.

If you wish to pursue an ACCA practising certificate and audit qualification in the future, then you should aim to achieve Options performance objectives numbers 11, 17 and 18:

- 11 Interpret financial transactions and financial statements
- 17 Prepare for and collect evidence for audit
- 18 Evaluate and report on audit.

In order that your pre-admission to membership experience can count towards your eligibility, you will need to either:

- have performance objectives 11, 17, 18 reviewed by a workplace mentor who holds an ACCA practising certificate and audit qualification or an equivalent qualification from another recognised professional accountancy body or
- have your performance objectives countersigned by a training supervisor who holds an ACCA practising certificate and audit qualification or an equivalent qualification from another recognised professional accountancy body.

You will also need to have completed Paper P7, *Advanced Audit and Assurance*, as one of your Options papers. You may take this paper post-qualification. If you were not working in audit when training for the qualification and did not choose Paper P7, this is a good opportunity to expand your skills base – and it will also count towards your continuing professional development (CPD).

Visit the 'Professional Standards' section of www.accaglobal.com for full details of the requirements.

2.11 WHY DO I NEED TO MAKE AN ANNUAL PER RETURN?

As part of the PER you are required to complete a PER return each year. The purpose of this annual return is to help you on your way to gaining ACCA membership. It allows ACCA to track your progress and assist you by developing products and services to help support your training and development.

All trainees are required to complete an annual return, including those studying on a full-time basis, those working in a non-relevant role, and those not working for other reasons, such as ill health. Even if you are working for a Gold or Platinum Approved Employer – trainee development stream and have claimed an exemption from recording your practical experience using the TDM, you will still need to complete an annual return.

To complete your return, select the 'annual return' option in the online TDM (Screen 7). There are various sections you need

to complete, depending on your working status, but the whole process will take you only a few minutes.

The annual return allows you to:

- view or confirm the performance objectives you have signed off to date, if relevant to your circumstances
- confirm the time (in months), since your last annual return, that you have been in a relevant role
- confirm that the information you have given is true by signing a declaration and agreeing that you are committed to your development and to ACCA's Code of Ethics.

You can complete your annual return online at any time in the annual return year, which starts on 1 January. If you are completing a paper-based annual return, this will be sent out with your annual subscription notification.

Irrespective of whether you complete an online or paper-based annual return, you must ensure that ACCA receives it by 1 January. You may wish to complete your annual return at the same time as you undergo your annual appraisal or review.

If you make more than one return in a year, the latest return will replace any earlier return, so make sure your latest entry includes ALL the months of experience gained since the previous year. For example, if you submitted your 2007 annual return at the end of March 2007 and declared that you had had three months' work experience, then you changed jobs and submitted another annual return at the end of November 2007, after completing an additional eight months' work experience, then the November return should show the total 11 months' work experience gained since January 1 2007.

2.12 WHAT IS A PER AUDIT?

ACCA will conduct PER audits to assure the quality of the PER process and to maintain the standards that are set out in the performance objectives.

¹ Please refer to ACCA Rulebook, section 2.1, point 8.2h for exceptions. The ACCA Rulebook can be downloaded from the professional standards area of www.accaglobal.com

03

GETTING STARTED

3.1 WHAT IS THE TRAINEE DEVELOPMENT MATRIX (TDM)?

To help you plan and record your PER you can access your personal TDM through *myACCA*. You will need your registration number and passcode to access *myACCA*.

The TDM is an online tool developed specifically for ACCA trainees. It will help you through every stage – from planning your development, targeting performance objectives, and writing the answers to your challenge questions – through to having these questions reviewed and signed off. It will also help you maintain a virtual CV, charting your employment and career progress. Finally, you can use it to complete your PER annual return.

The TDM uses a navigation system that you are likely to be familiar with from using other web-based systems and the Internet. There is a separate guide (accessed via *myACCA*) – The User Guide for the Online TDM – to help you through various functions, such as updating your employment details or adding a workplace mentor.

ACCA has also produced 18 short videos and podcasts to assist trainees and workplace mentors in completing the trainee development matrix (TDM). These provide a step-by-step guide to the functionality of the TDM. Visit the 'PER support' section of www.accaglobal.com to find out more.

3.2 HOW DO I FOLLOW THE PER PROCESS?

Finding a workplace mentor

Your first task is to get the support of a workplace mentor. It is important that you understand the PER and what you have to do. Your employer and workplace mentor may not have much time to devote to understanding the PER in detail. You should therefore be familiar with the requirements, so that you are able to answer any questions they may have. You can show that you are taking responsibility for your training and development and that you are committed to achieving your ACCA Qualification by demonstrating your knowledge of what you have to do and having ideas about how you might achieve the PER. Your employer and workplace mentor will see that it is important to you and will therefore be more committed to helping you.

Targeting performance objectives

With your workplace mentor, you should decide which performance objectives you are going to target or work towards achieving. You may find it useful to refer to the development plan in the TDM to help you (see section 3.7).

As you start to work with your workplace mentor you should agree how the relationship should be managed. For example, how often will you meet to discuss progress towards



achieving your performance objectives? It is essential for you both to agree, in advance, your expectations of the working relationship because this will avoid misunderstandings, unnecessary meetings, or unexpected requests. It is important to be proactive and plan ahead.

The frequency and length of meetings with your workplace mentor will vary. On some occasions, you may only need a short meeting for an update on progress but it is a good idea to have longer meetings perhaps twice a year both to review your progress and to plan ahead.

There are also some practical things you can do to make the most of the time you have scheduled with your workplace mentor. As well as taking responsibility for arranging and planning any meetings, think ahead about the agenda and anything you need to discuss. For example, if you are due to identify different ways in which you can achieve your practical experience, you should have some ideas ready before you sit down at the meeting.

You should also agree how and when your workplace mentor will review your performance objectives. For example, these could be reviewed as and when you have answered the challenge questions and submitted them for review through the online TDM, on a quarterly basis, or as part of your annual appraisal process.

Gaining practical experience

Ideally, through your job, your employer should give you the experience you need to achieve the performance objectives. If your current role offers few opportunities, you will need to think of ways to gain relevant experience. For example, you might consider a secondment, job rotation, or involvement in a project that will give you the necessary experience. If your current job is not relevant, you could gain experience by doing voluntary work for clubs, charities or associations. Alternatively, if your current job offers no opportunities for accountancy or finance-related activities it may be necessary to find a job that does.

There is no minimum or maximum time limit for achieving a performance objective, but you must be able to demonstrate that

you can carry out all the work activities that contribute to the performance objective, to a consistent standard.

Answering challenge questions

When you and your workplace mentor agree that you have achieved the necessary level of work required by a performance objective you should start to draft your answers to the challenge questions. It might be helpful to discuss with your workplace mentor what you should include in your answers. Remember, though, that you must answer the questions yourself.

Submitting for review and gaining sign-off

When your answers to the challenge questions have been completed you will need to submit them for review and sign-off by your workplace mentor. To do this, you will need to provide information about your workplace mentor, including a valid e-mail address, in the TDM. Remember to ensure that the details you provide are accurate, so that the mentor will be able to sign off your performance objective online.

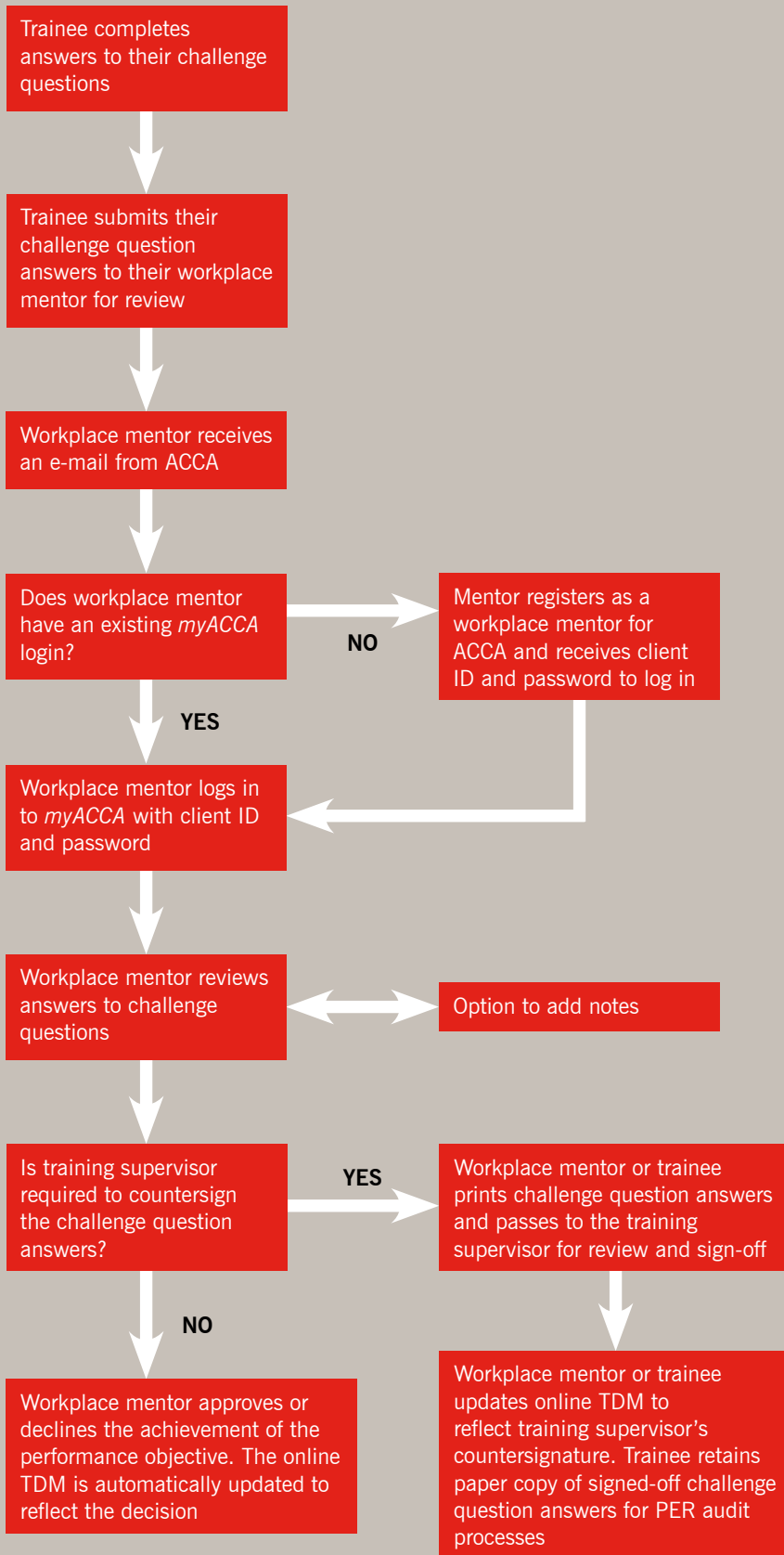
You and your workplace mentor should discuss the answers to your challenge questions and workplace performance. Your workplace mentor will then decide if you have met all the requirements, referring to the detail of the relevant performance objective to check you have also met the performance indicators. The review can be done in person or remotely by using the discussion facility in the TDM. The review may also be done in conjunction with a training supervisor.

If your workplace mentor decides that you have not yet achieved a particular performance objective then you should discuss this and ask for feedback. Try and be positive and do not regard this as failure, but instead as an indication that you need to focus on a specific area of your work in order to achieve the performance objective in the future. In these cases, you may find it useful to review your development plan (see section 3.7) and agree with your workplace mentor a plan of action that will help you work towards achieving the performance objective. Use the 'notes' field in the submission screens of the online TDM to record feedback from your workplace mentor.

TIP BOX

You should use the trainee development matrix (TDM) to track and record your achievement of the performance objectives.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE ONLINE SIGN-OFF PROCESS



3.3 WHICH PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES SHOULD I ATTEMPT FIRST?

The performance objectives you aim to achieve should be agreed with your workplace mentor. You should consider the following points when selecting which performance objectives to target:

- If you are studying for ACCA exams, choose the performance objectives that relate to these exams (see table). This way you will be able to put the knowledge and techniques you are learning into practice.
- Match any business-related objectives you have been set at work with the performance objectives. This will allow you to work towards both your business-related objectives and your PER at the same time.
- Review your access to work-experience opportunities, thereby identifying the performance objectives most appropriate to your circumstances.
- Use your role profile to help identify which performance objectives might be most appropriate to pursue (see section 3.7).

3.4 HOW DO I ANSWER CHALLENGE QUESTIONS?

Consider the following tips when answering challenge questions:

- Keep your answers concise, but not so brief that your workplace mentor cannot appreciate what you are recording. Provide evidence and examples to help illustrate your answers.
- Show your workplace mentor that you are achieving your goals and performing effectively in the workplace.
- Avoid repeating information or answers, or making reference to other answers.
- Check back against the detail of the performance objective's indicators of effective performance. Have you met all the outcomes and shown that you have conducted yourself in an appropriate manner?
- If you need to make reference to clients or particular documents that may be confidential, it might be more appropriate to use some references or codes instead. If you do, make sure that your workplace mentor

understands these references. You will also need to provide this information if you are selected by ACCA for a PER audit (see section 2.12), so we can confirm the authenticity of your work.

- If relevant, you might need to mention the size or variety of client firms.
- You can use information from existing documents that you have written, such as your performance appraisal form. You must make sure that whatever you use fully addresses the question. Remember that the questions are unique and your answers should be unique too. (If cutting and pasting from another document, please check that your answer is saved correctly by the TDM.)
- Avoid using jargon or abbreviations, unless they are explained.
- Remember that there is a limit of 500 words for each answer.

Your situation and experience are unique to you, so your workplace mentor and ACCA do not expect to see duplicated answers, whether from question to question, or from other trainees. If such duplication occurs then it may be referred to ACCA's Disciplinary Committee. This applies equally to both the online and printed versions of the TDM.

It is up to you to decide how to present the answers to your challenge questions, ensuring that your answers fully address the question set. You can use an essay style, bullet points, or any structure you prefer – as it is the content, not the format, of your answers that is important.

Exam paper	Area of knowledge	Performance objective
P1, Professional Accountant	Professionalism, ethics and governance	1* Demonstrate the application of professional ethics, values and judgment 2* Contribute to the effective governance of an organisation 3* Raise awareness of non-financial risk
All exam syllabuses test a range of personal effectiveness skills, including time management and communications skills	Personal effectiveness	4* Manage self 5* Communicate effectively 6* Use information and communications technology
P3, Business Analyst F1, Accountant in Business	Business Management	7* Manage ongoing activities in your area of responsibility 8* Improve departmental performance 9* Manage an assignment
P2, Corporate Reporting F7, Financial Reporting F3, Financial Accounting	Financial accounting and reporting	10 Prepare financial statements for external purposes 11 Interpret financial transactions and financial statements
P5, Advanced Performance Management F5, Performance Management F2, Management Accounting	Performance measurement and management accounting	12 Prepare financial information for management 13 Contribute to budget planning and production 14 Monitor and control budgets
P4, Advanced Financial Management F9, Financial Management	Finance and financial management	15 Evaluate potential business/ investment opportunities and the required finance options 16 Manage cash using active cash management and treasury systems
P7, Advanced Audit and Assurance F8, Audit and Assurance	Audit and assurance	17 Prepare for and collect evidence for audit 18 Evaluate and report on audit
P6, Advanced Taxation F6, Taxation	Taxation	19 Evaluate and compute taxes payable 20 Assist with tax planning
F4, Corporate and Business Law	Business and commercial tax	Law, regulation and compliance are integrated through appropriate performance objectives
* Performance objectives marked "*" are Essentials and MUST be completed by all trainees		

TIP BOX

Sample challenge question answers and mentor comments are available from the guidance section of the TDM.

3.5 HOW DOES A WORKPLACE MENTOR USE THE TDM?

Once you have found someone to act as your workplace mentor you should enter his or her details, including e-mail address, into the TDM. **The workplace mentor will not receive notification until you submit your first challenge question answers for review – so, if it is a long time between asking the person to be a workplace mentor and submitting your challenge question answers, it a good idea to explain that there will be an e-mail from ACCA.**

When the workplace mentor receives the notification e-mail, he or she must register on the TDM and will be given access to review your challenge questions and sign off your performance objective(s). **Please note: the mentor can review your challenge questions but cannot see or change anything in your TDM.**

ACCA provides a range of guidance materials to help your workplace mentor support your PER. Go to the 'Supporting Trainees' section of www.accglobal.com to find out more.

3.6 HOW OFTEN SHOULD I UPDATE MY TDM?

ACCA recommends that you keep all your TDM information up to date. One of the difficulties trainees often experience when they come to apply for membership is the loss of vital information, such as employer details, or they find that they have failed to gain sign-off for performance objectives achieved with a previous employer. By making sure all the information in your TDM is up to date, you will also have a 'virtual CV', ready to use when you need it. Always remember to update your TDM if you are moving to a new organisation or changing job roles, and ensure you have any relevant performance objectives reviewed and signed off by your workplace mentor. If you are leaving an Approved Employer see section 2.8.

3.7 HELP ME – WHERE DO I START?

The TDM includes a role profile section. Its purpose is to get you to start thinking about what you do and who might be able to help you with your PER, and suggests how you could start working towards your performance objectives.

Providing information about your role and responsibilities should start you thinking about your present work activities. If they match any of the 'Suggested Activities' in the performance objectives, this can help you to identify which of the performance objectives you should tackle first.

Completing the 'Key Relationships' section of the role profile should help you to identify those people who might be able to help with your PER. They might be potential workplace mentors, or they might be able to suggest some ways of getting access to the work experience you need. The role profiles, comprising real-life examples of trainee job roles, may help you to identify roles that you might want to pursue, in order to obtain the experience you need.

SCREEN 6: YOUR ROLE PROFILE

The screenshot shows a web form titled "YOUR ROLE PROFILE" with the ACCA logo in the top right corner. The form is for an employer named "ACCA". Below the title, there is a sub-header "YOUR ROLE PROFILE" and a note: "Employer: ACCA". A message says "Enter or update your role profile(s) while working at this employer." followed by an information icon. The form contains several input fields: "Start date" and "End date" (both with calendar icons), "Role title: What title best describes your role?" (a text box), "Purpose of the role: In one or two short sentences describe what is the key purpose of your role" (a text area), "Key relationships: list the internal and external stakeholders relevant to this role" (a text area), and "Key Activities" (a text area). On the right side, there is a button labeled "Example role profiles". At the bottom of the form, there are three buttons: "Print", "Save", and "Cancel".

SCREEN 7: DEVELOPMENT PLAN

YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Performance Objective 1-Demonstrate the application of professional ethics, value and judgement

Help plan your development by outlining how and when you will achieve this performance objective. [Click here](#) for further guidance and to view an example.

Target start:

Target end: 16-Apr-2008

How will I obtain this experience?

By working with.....

What skills do I need to develop and how can I do this?

Who will help me achieve this?

Print Save

You can also use the development plan (Screen 7) to ensure you make the most of the time you spend working towards the PER. You are encouraged to set target start and end dates. The target start date is when you will begin to work towards the performance objective, and by the target end date you should have achieved this. These dates will help you plan your progress, although you may achieve your performance objective sooner or later than you anticipated. You can amend the target dates to take into account your changing circumstances.

The development plan prompts you to think about the work experience you will need to have to achieve the performance objective. It may be that you need to plan, with your workplace mentor, a secondment or job rotation. You can record this in your plan. You are also asked to think about any skills you might need to develop to meet the performance objective as well as how you are going to develop these skills.

Finally, the development plan will prompt you to think about the people who will assist in your development. These could be internal, such as your line manager or the HR department, or external contacts who might help you get an external secondment.

NEED MORE HELP?

Please visit www.accaglobal.com
for further guidance and support
for PER

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