



ACA progress planning – setting yourself sensible milestones

Nicola Mower, ICAEW Training and CPD Manager, guides you on how to plan and achieve the workplace and exam requirements throughout your ACA training.

Qualifying as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant is not just about the exams – have you planned how you will achieve the workplace requirements?

As you know, the ACA consists of four elements:

1. Practical work experience
2. Professional development*
3. Ethics and professional scepticism; and
4. Exams

Often, the focus is on when you will study for and sit the exams, but the three other elements are equally as important and deserve some careful planning. Setting appropriate milestones helps to manage expectations and creates structure for you to work through each requirement at a sensible and digestible pace.

Demonstration of incremental development is key in developing your confidence, celebrating your strengths and identifying areas for improvement, while also satisfying ICAEW regulations and holding six-monthly reviews.

The table below provides suggested milestones that we recommend for a student completing a three-year training agreement.

Six-monthly period	Practical work experience	Professional development: your example plus employer feedback	Ethics learning programme **	Ethics in practice scenarios	Exams
1 st	Record your days during this period	Step 1 from each ladder	Work through and complete modules, 1, 2, 3 including progress tests	Prepare scenarios 1, 2 and 3 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Three Certificate Level exams
2 nd	Record your days during this period	Step 2 from each ladder	Work through and complete modules 4, 5, 6 including progress tests Take the ethics assessment	Prepare scenarios 4, 5 and 6 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Three Certificate Level exams
3 rd	Record your days during this period	Steps 3 and 4 from each ladder		Prepare scenarios 7, 8 and 9 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Three Professional Level exams

4 th	Record your days during this period	Steps 5 and 6 from each ladder		Prepare scenarios 10, 11 and 12 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Three Professional Level exams
5 th	Record your days during this period	Steps 7 and 8 from each ladder		Prepare scenarios 13, 14 and 15 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Two Advanced Level exams
6 th	Record your days during this period			Prepare scenarios 16, 17 and 18 for discussion, plus a real scenario	Advanced Level Case Study

In addition to the above, you may want to record audit experience towards the UK Audit Qualification. You must record this experience within your training file every six months and submit it for employer feedback. Days not claimed during training will not be able to count towards the Audit Qualification at a later date. [Find out more.](#)

ACA training file planner

Download the blank version of the [milestone table](#). You may wish to complete this with your employer so that you are clear on how you will move through each requirement and what your employer will review at each six-monthly review meeting. Remember, you need to update all sections of your online training file after each six-monthly review, including your employer's comments, and you will show reasonable progress in each area.

You can also add in your exam milestones including when you plan to study, revise and take your exams.

Good luck!

* During your training you will follow either the ICAEW professional development skills or complete your employer's professional development training programme.

** The ethics and professional scepticism programme you will follow depends on the date you registered with us as a student – the guidance within this blog is designed for students who registered from 1 July 2020. If you registered up to and including 30 June 2020, read the information that applies to you [here](#).