

Using the Work of an Expert

The Singapore Standard on Auditing SSA 18 “Using the Work of an Expert” was approved by the Council of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore in September 1996.

Auditors are required to comply with the auditing standards contained in this SSA in respect of audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after 1 January 1997.

SSA 620 supersedes SSA 18 of the same title in June 2004. No substantive changes have been made to the original approved text and all cross references have been updated, as appropriate.

This revised SSA 620 supersedes the SSA of the same title in June 2005.

The Audit Risk Standards, comprising SSA 315 “Understanding the Entity and Its Environment and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement”, SSA 330 “The Auditor’s Procedures in Response to Assessed Risks” and SSA 500 (Revised) “Audit Evidence” gave rise to conforming amendments in this SSA. These amendments are effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after 15 December 2004.

Singapore Standards on Auditing (SSAs) are to be applied in the audit of financial statements. SSAs are also to be applied, adapted as necessary, to the audit of other information and to related services.

SSAs contain the basic principles and essential procedures (identified in bold type black lettering) together with related guidance in the form of explanatory and other material. The basic principles and essential procedures are to be interpreted in the context of the explanatory and other material that provide guidance for their application.

To understand and apply the basic principles and essential procedures together with the related guidance, it is necessary to consider the whole text of the SSA including explanatory and other material contained in the SSA not just that text which is black lettered.

In exceptional circumstances, an auditor may judge it necessary to depart from an SSA in order to more effectively achieve the objective of an audit. When such a situation arises, the auditor should be prepared to justify the departure.

SSAs need only be applied to material matters.

The Public Sector Perspective (PSP) issued is set out at the end of an SSA. Where no PSP is added, the SSA is applicable in all material respects to the public sector.

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SINGAPORE STANDARD ON AUDITING

SSA 620

Using the Work of an Expert

Foreword

This Standard is based on International Standard on Auditing 620.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this Singapore Standard on Auditing (SSA) is to establish standards and provide guidance on using the work of an expert as audit evidence.
2. **When using the work performed by an expert, the auditor should obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence that such work is adequate for the purposes of the audit.**
3. "Expert" means a person or firm possessing special skill, knowledge and experience in a particular field other than accounting and auditing.
4. The auditor's education and experience enable the auditor to be knowledgeable about business matters in general, but the auditor is not expected to have the expertise of a person trained for or qualified to engage in the practice of another profession or occupation, such as an actuary or engineer.
5. An expert may be:
 - a) Contracted by the entity;
 - b) Contracted by the auditor;
 - c) Employed by the entity; or
 - d) Employed by the auditor.

When the auditor uses the work of an expert employed by the audit firm, the auditor will be able to rely on the firm's systems for recruitment and training that determine that expert's capabilities and competence, as explained in SSA 220, "Quality Control for Audits of Historical Financial Information" instead of needing to evaluate them for each audit engagement .

Determining the Need to Use the Work of an Expert

6. In obtaining an understanding of the entity and performing further procedures in response to assessed risks, the auditor may need to obtain, in conjunction with the entity or independently, audit evidence in the form of reports, opinions, valuations and statements of an expert. Examples are:
 - Valuations of certain types of assets, for example, land and buildings, plant and machinery, works of art, and precious stones.
 - Determination of quantities or physical condition of assets, for example, minerals stored in stockpiles, underground mineral and petroleum reserves, and the remaining useful life of plant and machinery
 - Determination of amounts using specialized techniques or methods, for example, an actuarial valuation.
 - The measurement of work completed and to be completed on contracts in progress.

- Legal opinions concerning interpretations of agreements, statutes and regulations.
7. When determining the need to use the work of an expert, the auditor would consider:
- a) The engagement team's knowledge and previous experience of the matter being considered;
 - b) The risk of material misstatement based on the nature, complexity, and materiality of the matter being considered; and
 - c) The quantity and quality of other audit evidence expected to be obtained.

Competence and Objectivity of the Expert

8. **When planning to use the work of an expert, the auditor should evaluate the professional competence of the expert.** This will involve considering the expert's:
- a) Professional certification or licensing by, or membership in, an appropriate professional body; and
 - b) Experience and reputation in the field in which the auditor is seeking audit evidence.
9. **The auditor should evaluate the objectivity of the expert.**
10. The risk that an expert's objectivity will be impaired increases when the expert is:
- a) Employed by the entity; or
 - b) Related in some other manner to the entity, for example, by being financially dependent upon or having an investment in the entity.

If the auditor is concerned regarding the competence or objectivity of the expert the auditor needs to discuss any reservations with management and consider whether sufficient appropriate audit evidence can be obtained concerning the work of an expert. The auditor may need to undertake additional audit procedures or seek audit evidence from another expert (after taking into account the factors in paragraph 7).

Scope of the Expert's Work

11. **The auditor should obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence that the scope of the expert's work is adequate for the purposes of the audit.** Audit evidence may be obtained through a review of the terms of reference which are often set out in written instructions from the entity to the expert. Such instructions to the expert may cover matters such as:
- The objectives and scope of the expert's work.
 - A general outline as to the specific matters the auditor expects the expert's report to cover.
 - The intended use by the auditor of the expert's work, including the possible communication to third parties of the expert's identity and extent of involvement.
 - The extent of the expert's access to appropriate records and files.
 - Clarification of the expert's relationship with the entity, if any.
 - Confidentiality of the entity's information.
 - Information regarding the assumptions and methods intended to be used by the expert and their consistency with those used in prior periods.

In the event that these matters are not clearly set out in written instructions to the expert, the auditor may need to communicate with the expert directly to obtain audit evidence in this regard. In obtaining an understanding of the entity, the auditor also considers whether to include the expert during the engagement team's discussion of the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement.

Evaluating the Work of the Expert

12. **The auditor should evaluate the appropriateness of the expert's work as audit evidence regarding the assertion being considered.** This will involve evaluation of whether the substance of the expert's findings is properly reflected in the financial statements or supports the assertions, and consideration of:
 - Source data used.
 - Assumptions and methods used and their consistency with prior periods.
 - Results of the expert's work in the light of the auditor's overall knowledge of the business and of the results of other audit procedures.
13. When considering whether the expert has used source data which is appropriate in the circumstances, the auditor would consider the following procedures:
 - a) Making inquiries regarding any procedures undertaken by the expert to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable; and
 - b) Reviewing or testing the data used by the expert.
14. The appropriateness and reasonableness of assumptions and methods used and their application are the responsibility of the expert. The auditor does not have the same expertise and, therefore, cannot always challenge the expert's assumptions and methods. However, the auditor will need to obtain an understanding of the assumptions and methods used and to consider whether they are appropriate and reasonable, based on the auditor's knowledge of the business and the results of other audit procedures.
15. **If the results of the expert's work do not provide sufficient appropriate audit evidence or if the results are not consistent with other audit evidence, the auditor should resolve the matter.** This may involve discussions with the entity and the expert, applying additional audit procedures, including possibly engaging another expert, or modifying the auditor's report.

Reference to an Expert in the Auditor's Report

16. **When issuing an unmodified auditor's report, the auditor should not refer to the work of an expert.** Such a reference might be misunderstood to be a qualification of the auditor's opinion or a division of responsibility, neither of which is intended.
17. If, as a result of the work of an expert, the auditor decides to issue a modified auditor's report, in some circumstances it may be appropriate, in explaining the nature of the modification, to refer to or describe the work of the expert (including the identity of the expert and the extent of the expert's involvement). In these circumstances, the auditor would obtain the permission of the expert before making such a reference. If permission is refused and the auditor believes a reference is necessary, the auditor may need to seek legal advice.