



# **The Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies**

## **Event Report December 2006**

### **Ethics Education Forum**

#### ***CCAB Ethics Education Forum***

***11 December 2006***

#### **The ethical challenge**

Accountancy professionals gathered in London to discuss the ethics education of accountants. The public relies on the ethical integrity of the accountancy profession, individual members and firms to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded.

As a result of the accounting scandals which happened at the turn of the century, it is vital for professional accountants to be equipped to fulfil their ethical responsibility and continue to restore public confidence in the profession.

Ethical standards encompass integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour. These are standards which should always be observed by professional accountants. Together these principles articulate and identify what it means to be a professional accountant and express the profession's commitment to the highest set of values. They are the framework for the judgements made on a daily basis and a benchmark for other professions.

These values are challenged on a daily basis where professionals face conflict from competing interests that is why qualifications and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are aimed at ensuring that all members and students are well equipped to deal with these threats.

But how are ethical standards to be taught? Ethics education not only has to impart knowledge and understanding but has to imbue integrity and the innate ethical responsibilities which are the lifeblood of our profession. Ethics is much more than blind compliance: it is about an attitude of mind. In many cases there is not a simple choice between right from wrong. Often it is a 'right versus right' dilemma that an individual has to choose between. This provides the greatest challenge when developing and delivering ethics education.

## **The role of the CCAB**

The Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies (CCAB) comprises the six UK and RoI chartered professional accountancy bodies ICAEW, ICAS, ICAI, ACCA CIMA and CIPFA. Through this Education Forum it is addressing the challenge of ethics education covering all of the profession from accounting students through to experienced professional accountants and wherever accounting professionals are working in commerce and industry, firms or in not-for profit sector.

## **Objective of the Forum**

The objective of the Forum was to provide an opportunity for those involved in the ethics education of accountants to share their experience and ideas in this critical field. Those with an interest in the ethics education of accountants include those from universities, training companies, employers and CCAB bodies.

The day was designed to have a practical focus identifying the challenges and the solutions to developing and maintaining professional values, ethics and attitudes among professional accountants.

## **PART I**

### **Proposed International Education Practice Statement**

The International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB), an independent standard-setting board established by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), has issued an Exposure Draft of a Proposed International Education Practice Statement (IEPS), *Approaches to Developing and Maintaining Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*. The Forum looked at how the proposed IEPS may change ethical training in the UK. The proposed IEPS was introduced by Simon Thompson, IAESB Technical Manager.

The IAESB sets standards and provides good practice guidance in accounting education. The need to develop guidance on IES 4, *Professional Values Ethics and Values* led to the development of the proposed IEPS, which is based on a research report on ethics education commissioned by the IAESB, and published as an International Education Paper (IEP). In addition, the IAESB has produced a CD ROM ethics education toolkit containing case studies, supporting notes, PowerPoint presentations, video clips – teaching materials designed to be of practical use to member bodies and professional educators.

All of this is part of the work being undertaken to restore the reputation of the profession including the strengthening of the IFAC Code of Ethics which all 155 member bodies have to adopt and implement and there is a programme to ensure compliance. IFAC recognises that a code of ethics on its own will not ensure that accountants behave ethically.

Standards cannot cover every ethical issue. It is clearly in the public interest that accountants approach ethical decision making with an understanding of, and an ability to apply, the fundamental principles set out in the code of ethics. Accountants need to recognise the ethical threats they are likely to face in the course of their work. Accountants have to do more than read and memorise the code of ethics to ensure ethical decisions are reached or accountants behave ethically. Education programmes have a critical role in developing ethical attitudes and behaviours and are aimed at enhancing professional accountants' behaviour and decision making.

IES 4 prescribes how ethics and values should be acquired by students so that at the point of qualification they were equipped with the appropriate professional ethics, values and attitudes.

### **The Ethics Education Framework (EEF)**

All professional accountants must develop an understanding of professional values and required ethical behaviour.

Professional ethics should be a core part of the education programme and treated in their own right, they should not be peripheral to the technical subjects.

Professional ethics and values needs to begin early in education and needs to be re-emphasised beyond qualification through CPD.

Professional accountants must not only know about ethics they must act ethically.

IES 4 contains little detail of how these topics should be taught, assessed and integrated into accounting education programmes.

The proposed IEPS is intended to provide guidance to IFAC member bodies on how to achieve good practice in developing professional values, ethics and attitudes in accordance with International Education Standard 4, *Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*. It is also intended to provide guidance to IFAC member bodies to enable their members to develop professional values, ethics, and attitudes and demonstrate a continued commitment to ethical behavior throughout their careers through CPD.

It recommends a flexible, competency based Ethics Education Framework (EEF) The EEF outlines four stages on a learning continuum based on the four objectives of ethics education:

- Knowledge
- Sensitivity
- Judgement and
- Behaviour.

Each objective applies to a particular level of advancement in the development of professional values, ethics and attitudes. The EEF recognises that ethics education is a lifelong commitment that begins early in a prequalification programme and continues throughout a professional accountant's career. It establishes a four-stage learning continuum, with learning outcomes and a description of competence required for each stage.

The four stages are:

- Enhancing Ethics Knowledge
- Developing Ethical Sensitivity
- Improving Ethical Judgement and
- Maintaining an ongoing commitment to ethical behaviour.

The ED suggests that the case study method effectively develops ethical awareness and analytical skills. This supports the conclusions of the Professional Oversight Board Review of Training and Education in the UK Accountancy Profession in 2005. That review concluded that learning from experience is a particularly effective way to cover fraud and inaccuracy within CPD at all levels within the profession. The case study approach helps to integrate learning and the realities of the work experience.

Following on from the presentation of the proposed IEPS, *Approaches to Developing and Maintaining Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*, participants in the Forum discussed the issues raised in the presentation in break out groups.

In particular the respondents were asked to discuss and comment on the two approaches set out in the ED for implementing the Ethics Education Framework (EEF). The EEF was supported as a useful tool for understanding the ethics education process. However, it was questioned whether it was appropriate for the EEF to move beyond professional ethics to extend to a more general coverage of morals.

The IEPS recommends two approaches to implementing the EEF: the Topic Approach, and the Stage-by-Stage Approach.

IFAC member bodies may choose to follow one approach, or to mix elements of both, as appropriate for their local circumstances. Both approaches stress the importance of integrating ethics education into pre-qualification accounting education programmes, and the importance of revisiting and reinforcing knowledge and capabilities learned through CPD. Both approaches also emphasise the role of workplace learning and assessment in the development of professional values, ethics and attitudes.

## **Two Approaches to Implementing the EEF**

### *The Topic Approach*

IES 4 prescribes a number of ethics topics to be included in all pre-qualification education programmes. These have been aligned with eight essential subject areas contained in the EEF. This approach implements the first three stages of the EEF subject by subject in relevant parts of the pre-qualification programme, with Stage 4 being implemented post-qualification, as part of a member body's CPD programme.

### *The Stage-by-Stage Approach*

The Stage-by-Stage Approach incorporates the first three stages of the EEF in pre-qualification education programmes and the fourth stage in both pre- and post-qualification education programmes. This approach introduces ethics early in the prequalification programme, followed by ethics education being integrated with existing accounting modules or courses, and culminates in a final module/course that ties together previous ethics material. Ethics education then continues through CPD.

The Forum considered both the topic and the stage approach. It was generally agreed that it is important to cover all four stages of ethics education during a professional accountant's pre- and post qualification education and development. The group discussions identified that there is also a need to revise and revisit the stages throughout an accountant's career and this highlights the importance of ethics education continuing post-qualification through CPD. It was suggested that a regular cycle of ethics training developing ethical sensitivity and judgement could be valuable.

Feedback from the discussion groups emphasised that the approach to assessment is most likely to be flexible using a mixture of formal, work-based and self-assessment. There has to be a distinction between testing knowledge of ethics compared to testing ethical competence.

## **Separate or integrated?**

One of the key questions in ethics education is whether there should be a separate, assessed final course or module in ethics or whether there should be an integrated approach to ethics education that embeds ethics throughout the accounting curriculum.

A consequence of the emphasis on workplace learning and assessment with employers is that it is difficult to reconcile that approach with a separate ethics module. However one possibility is some kind of final assessment in ethics, either as a separate assessment or as part of an overall assessment, probably adopting a case study approach. It has to be recognised that for those in the early phase of their career the focus is on passing exams rather than on work-based behaviour. Whilst the discussion groups recognised benefits in both separate and integrated assessments the majority favoured an integrated approach that embedded ethics throughout the curriculum.

## **Workplace learning**

It is clear that employers are a key anchor for ethics education with employers being responsible for setting the tone at the top. Therefore it is logical to ensure that there is strong support of workplace learning and assessment. However it has to be recognised that an emphasis on workplace learning will place a burden in particular on mentors responsible for overseeing and assessing trainees' ethical development. More guidance and training for mentors in the area of ethics would be useful.

A key area is the objectivity and reliability of workplace assessment. It may be necessary to have more detailed guidance in this area and to consider how workplace learning assessment may be effectively implemented in smaller firms.

As always it has to be recognised that professional accountants work and train in different types of organisations and ethical training applies equally to all accountants whether working in public practice, business or elsewhere. While the fundamental principles are universal there maybe a need for further guidance to support educators and mentors who support accountants training in business. Financial professionals in business will be working with non-accountants who are less likely to understand or pay regard to ethical principles.

There is an argument for a particular emphasis on ethics education for qualified accountants. In particular (a) professionals joining from other sectors may not have received appropriate ethics education and training and (b) professional accountants moving to senior roles could be exposed to different types of ethical dilemmas not previously encountered.

It should not be taken for granted that employers will be able to deliver good and reliable work-based ethical training. As well as the case study approach, the use of mentoring in ethics education should be explored. It should be recognised that students and professionals will have been exposed to varying ethical experiences even within the same organisation.

## **A question of courage**

One element that could be included in the EEF is the concept of "ethical courage" – i.e. the willingness to act ethically in a situation that may have a negative impact on an individual's career. It should be noted that the proposed statement does give emphasis to "ethical leadership" though it may be possible for the final Practice Statement to give this concept greater stress. It should be made clear that ethical leadership in the workplace is key.

*You want to engender the idea that there is support there and people should have the courage to act if they see something wrong.*

Philippa Foster Back, Institute of Business Ethics

## **Ongoing commitment**

As financial professionals work in many different types of organisations with varying cultures it is an open question of how far the ethical approach can be and should be standardised.

It is clear from the Forum that there is a need for ongoing ethics education and that professional accountants needed to revisit all ethics education to ensure that they are up to date. Finance people are spread across all walks of life. Ethics education, especially at the beginning of people's career, should recognise that financial professionals will often move out of straight financial roles.

## **PART II**

### **Sharing real life ethical threats and challenges**

After examining the proposed IEPS, *Approaches to Developing and Maintaining Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*, the Forum moved on to discuss how to share real life ethical threats and challenges. The issue was first explored through a Panel Discussion and then the Forum broke into smaller group to discuss the IEPS.

### **The advantage of the case study approach**

The proposed IEPS, *Approaches to Developing and Maintaining Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*, suggests that the case study method effectively develops ethical awareness and analytical skills. Case studies involve students and/or professional accountants in real life events and provide insights into what it feels like to experience such problems. By reviewing past events individuals can identify predicaments previously faced by other professional accountants and learn how they were resolved.

It is widely believed that the availability of 'real-life' UK case studies to facilitate this is currently limited because experience is not usually shared across organisations. The Forum examined the case for learning from experience; discussed the ways that experience could be shared effectively; tried to establish what makes the real life experience valid and relevant for accounting professionals; and explored the way that real life case studies could be collected, edited and communicated.

### **The Panel Discussion**

The Panel examined the practicalities of using case studies to further the education of ethics and how real-life experiences can be shared between organisations..

### **What makes a 'good' case study?**

The Panel agreed that the case study approach is seen as the most effective way of making people sensitive to ethical dilemmas and to issues in the day-to-day work environment. Case studies do not have to be long and complex. Working through cameos and mini case studies can be effective even if they drawn up on a generic basis. There is a problem with using specific real-life examples because there is a risk of running up against data protection and disclosure.

*To create the discussion it is possible to use generic examples. You don't even have to be that specific as long as you put it into context.*  
Myles Thompson, KPMG

Confidentiality is always a concern but the profession has to explore ways to research, publish and learn from individual cases. To overcome confidentiality it is valid to draw out from experiences generic learning points, setting them in a context which is useful for the learners and presenting them in such a way - as is the case in real life- so as there are no clear cut answers. It is inevitable there will then be a range of responses. It has to be stressed that there will not be easy right or wrong answers.

There is a question of currency: how do we make real life experience valid? Ethical issues cannot be treated as a factual subject. Ethics revolves around the behaviour of people it is not a book exercise so people cannot be assessed on whether they have “passed ethics”. The advantage of the case study is that it measures people’s responses. It has to be realised that ethical issues will inevitably arise in any business.

Case studies can work for both junior and senior professionals. So a case study could help junior accountants who are asked “to push the accruals figure”. At the same time case studies can work to explore more serious ethical dilemmas encompassing more sophisticated and complex issues. The more senior professional will come under pressure on more “structural accounting” issues in response to strategic business issues.

*It all goes back to when the young accountant is asked: “What have you got in your bottom drawer to make this earnings forecast right?”*  
Brian Walsh FCMA.

The key to ethical behaviour is the climate set by the Board, and these days in particular by the Audit Committee as well. There needs to be awareness of certain euphemisms –i.e. aggression rather than caution, growth orientated – which can suggest that the climate is wrong. This can result, for instance, in a belief especially in the finance department that its role is to deliver a set of result that will have the best impact on their share price. And if that does not happen then the finance department is “not contributing”.

Ethics education is a topic of its time. The sophistication of financial reporting and the regulatory climate means that there is far more complexity. This means that questions are an increasing reality. Ethics education has not kept pace with other aspects of accounting – such as technical skills – and it is this lack of progress which is being addressed.

Case studies have to be put into a context of what a particular organisation stands for, what are the core values. Individuals need to know they are in a place which engenders ethical behaviour and where taking an ethical stance will be supported. Ethical responses and education should be seen as a part of the criteria for recruitment.

It is perceived that there is no material difference between public and private sector when it comes to ethical issues and ethics education. For instance, is there any difference between maximising profit in the private sector and working to obtain a maximum government grant in the public sector? The transparency and reporting that exists in the public sector does offer material for case studies. For instance the Audit Commission reports publicly on governance

failures, or where poor judgements have been made. Then these can be legitimately used as case studies.

Case studies can help in developing judgement and “seeing the bigger picture”. And this has to be seen in the context of organisations and individuals finding time to think through issues. Ethical cases studies should not always focus on failures; we should search out the good news cases as well.

*Case studies help people to manage, make decisions think around the subject and balance the priorities. What we see is where people get the balance wrong.*

Andrew Baigent, National Audit Office

## **Practical issues**

The Panel saw few difficulties with the practical use of case studies. This was in contrast to the assumed position that there are practical difficulties in generating case studies. It was suggested that the response to the case study is often the difficulty. So setting up the circumstances and ‘the story’ of what actually happened is relatively easy. What is more difficult is exposing the thought processes and the considerations that were taken into account in reaching the decision.

The danger with detailed case studies is that people may start trying to copy examples and that there will be a mental ‘box ticking exercise’ where respondents copy the behaviours of the case studies that they have used. People can learn from experience but they have to use their own judgements in particular circumstances.

The best case studies could also have an interactive element in the sense that they should integrate with the circumstances that are likely to be faced in a particular role or situation.

Experience teaches us that there is often more than one version of the truth. Case studies allow the development of more than one interpretation and allow individuals and organisations to ask “What would I do in those circumstances?” Case studies provide great flexibility because it is possible to change aspects of a case study which can then radically alter the possible range of responses.

*People need to remember there is always more than one version of the truth and one person’s interpretation will be different from another’s. That is why using case studies can be so powerful.*

Sue Exton, Audit Commission

It is possible to create generic examples that can be shared within and across organisations which circumnavigates potential legal difficulties. Case studies do not have to be enormously detailed to start a useful learning exercise.

The training approach needs to be as real life as possible, but the issues of confidentiality should not be seen as insurmountable. Whatever the problems the objective remains to deliver the appropriate education to the right people.

Unethical behaviour will always happen. The issue is not only how you respond to an ethical issue, in addition organisations have to decide on the transparency that they give to these issues both internally and externally, such as reporting to the markets. So responding to

ethical behaviour is one set of learning objectives, the reporting of ethical issues is another. And the latter will increasingly become a crucial issue in the ethics education of senior professionals and non-executives.

Part of the problem of developing case studies has been the lack of willingness to be transparent on these issues. For example accounting firms would acknowledge that they have had problems with explaining why they have resigned from an audit (this could change with the introduction of the Companies Act 2006.)

CCAB bodies do recognise that they have a problem of getting sufficient up to date examples of dilemmas to turn into a case study. The CCAB bodies do need to work harder to get those examples in front of students. In particular the CCAB bodies have to be aware of the need to keep up to date. Over time perceptions change of what is accepted ethical behaviour in business life and elsewhere. Individuals and organisations have to be aware of these changing attitudes.

The CCAB bodies have to work hard on this issue in order to educate and re-educate their members. And at the same time they need the co-operation of their members, companies, government and organisations to offer examples which they can teach to students and members.

One danger or disadvantage of case studies is the problem of over simplification. Often case studies will be used with a particular answer or outcome in mind and real life is rarely that simple. From experience it seems both students and members do find ethical dilemmas – whether in real life or in case study form – difficult. It should therefore be borne in mind that case studies will not be the whole answer and learning through real life practical examples will inevitably be needed.

While it may be difficult to get at the causes and the particular decisions, it may be more worthwhile to focus attention on the consequences. The impact of ethical decisions could be assessed on the various stakeholder groups. Impacts might have to be imputed because they will not necessarily be documented. This may be a valuable developmental experience for students.

### **How do we make this real?**

One element which case studies can facilitate is the use of role playing. Role playing can be immensely powerful and in some organisations it is an established mode of training. Case studies can be used for assessment purposes and in development giving learning opportunities for students to put themselves in the shoes of people who have faced ethical situations.

Role playing can help to tease out different cultural backgrounds and experiences of individuals and therefore can be used to assess different cultural norms. Having learners involved with role play helps with ensuring there is ‘buy in’ of the company’s ethical stance. However role play has to be set up correctly in order for it to be relevant. For instance, it has to be realistic, it has to be a topic that is relevant and it works well if the situation can be linked to life dilemmas and not just business dilemmas. i.e. what is the difference between realising you have been undercharged in a restaurant and being undercharged by a supplier? The question can then be posed ‘is that right and is that the way we want to behave as both individuals and organisations?’

It may need to be recognised that role playing may appeal more to the younger generation.

Ethics education can be seen as setting up a discussion, a context and then exploring the issues. The training is the second part of the process. The first part is that you have the culture right, right framework and standards so that there is an openness that allows it to be discussed.

The responsibility for the training has to rest with individual organisations, with the professional accounting bodies having an important role to play in terms of knowledge provision, training and exams. Organisations have to instil good ethical behaviour in all their employees and then in certain sectors (such as audit) regulators have the responsibility to monitor performance on that aspect.

Ethics education can be extended outside the profession. For instance under the corporate governance code, non-executive directors have a responsibility to educate themselves. And there is a need for such training.

Ethical training can be delivered as a blend through both face-to face training and e-learning (technology based training). Training does need to be across the organisation. Many organisations have codes of ethics and their needs to be knowledge of these codes.

### **Main points brought out by the Panel Discussion**

Case studies work, there is no alternative approach in this area.

Generic case studies are perfectly acceptable. It is the way the case study is used to provoke thought and discussion which is the key point.

The perception of ethical and unethical behaviour is constantly changing, members and students need to be kept up to date with those changes.

There is a need to ensure that case studies are not oversimplified and that they have the feel of real life.

Role play and case studies can be brought together to make effective learning.

### **More general ethical issues**

The need for courage

The buck stops with the board.

Ethical tone is set at the top (Board and Audit Committee)

Employees need to know the core values of the organisation

Employees need to know that they will be supported if they take an ethical stance.

Members of The Panel were:

Philippa Foster Back, Institute of Business Ethics

Sue Exton, Audit Commission

Andrew Baigent, National Audit Office

Myles Thompson, KPMG

Brian Walsh FCMA.

### **Nature of case studies**

After the Panel Discussion the Forum moved into break out sessions to discuss how case studies could be used to promote ethics education. The groups debated to what extent they supported the view that there is a greater need for sharing of experiences within the UK accounting profession in dealing with ethical issues and fraud. They also considered what

arrangements, if any, could be established in the UK accountancy profession to make case study material could be made more accessible.

The groups specifically considered:

- How can organisations be involved in sharing real life ethical threats and challenges? Is there a need to change culture?
- How can issues of confidentiality be overcome?
- How can information be shared across organisations?
- What level of detail would be needed in the case studies?
- How recent do the cases have to be?
- How can the costs be managed?
- How could the material be delivered/made accessible?

A number of the groups discussed whether CCAB should be encouraged to take a lead in creating and maintaining a pool of case studies. At the same time, it was suggested that IFAC should be encouraged to approach top organisations to provide case study material. Thought could be given to using technology in the form of blogs or moderated forums in order to encourage discussion of ethics within the profession. It seems likely the cost of undertaking such an exercise would fall mainly on the CCAB bodies. If ethics education is going to be taken seriously by the accountancy profession it has to be a key component of CPD.

There was a view among most participants that some case study material was already in existence and could be found on the web sites of CCAB bodies. Before providing more case studies it may be advantageous to encourage accountants to engage with the material which is already in existence. CCAB bodies could also look to capturing resources such as helplines to provide case study material.

Case studies could also include 'good news' where an ethical dilemma had been satisfactorily resolved rather than just hearing about ethical problems that were not satisfactorily resolved.

The breakout groups suggested there is a place for both short case studies and more detailed in-depth studies which would be more appropriate for more senior accountants.

It is inevitable that fears remain over the idea of sharing case studies, largely based on legal and reputational considerations. The idea remains that case studies can be sanitised to enable sharing without losing the nature of the learning experience.

Key points arising from breakout groups

- Debate over the role CCAB and IFAC should be playing in ethics education
- Perceptions that case study material already existed and was not fully utilised.
- Ethical funds are growing. Is there a link that can be made with these funds. Have they explored the issue of ethics education?
- CCAB bodies to develop relationships with members and organisation on ethical issues.
- CCAB bodies together to act as a clearing house/filter for making case studies anonymous.
- CCAB bodies to explore using existing information from helplines and disciplinary cases.

## Summary of outcomes

All professional accountants must develop an understanding of professional values and required ethical behaviour. Education programmes have a critical role in developing ethical attitudes and behaviours and are aimed at enhancing professional accountants' behaviour and decision making.

Professional ethics should be a core part of the education programme and treated in their own right, they should not be peripheral to the technical subjects.

Professional ethics and values needs to begin early in education and needs to be re-emphasised beyond qualification through CPD. This should involve covering the four stages of ethics education during a professional accountant's pre-and post qualification education and development. There is also a need to revise and revisit the stages throughout an accountant's career and this highlights the importance of ethics education continuing post-qualification through CPD. The approach to assessment will be flexible using a mixture of formal, work-based and self-assessment.

Employers are responsible for setting the ethical culture and tone and therefore have a major part to play in ethics education. Sharing real life ethical threats and challenges is a key way to deliver ethics education. The only practical way to deliver this real life approach is through the use of case studies. Case studies can be used by all levels of finance professionals and can be adapted and used in flexible and imaginative ways to sensitise financial professionals to ethical dilemmas and issues in the day-to-day work environment. While there are some practical, commercial and legal difficulties in using case studies, it is possible to overcome these difficulties in a bid to deliver the nature of professional ethics education and CPD which is required for the accountancy profession to fulfil its public interest remit. The CCAB bodies have a leading role in ensuring this ethics education is delivered.

## Appendix 1

A section of links to sources.

### The Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies (CCAB)

CCAB provides a forum in which matters affecting the profession as a whole can be discussed and co-ordinated and enables the profession to speak with a unified voice to government. [www.ccab.org.uk](http://www.ccab.org.uk).

The CCAB Bodies are:

- The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) <http://www.icaew.co.uk/>
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) [http:// www.icas.org.uk](http://www.icas.org.uk)
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI) [http:// www.icaei.ie/](http://www.icaei.ie/)
- The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) <http://www.accaglobal.com/>
- The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) <http://www.cimaglobal.com>
- The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) <http://www.cipfa.org.uk>.

IFAC KnowledgeNet This new global web-based resource provides one-stop access to thousands of articles, management tools and good practice guidance developed for professional accountants in business by IFAC and more than a dozen professional accountancy organizations worldwide. <http://www.ifac.org/>

Institute of Business Ethics The IBE was established in 1986 to encourage high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values. The IBE assists in the development, implementation and embedding of effective and relevant ethics and corporate responsibility policies. <http://www.ibe.org.uk/>

The National Audit Office The NAO is an independent body which scrutinises public spending on behalf of Parliament. Auditing government activities gives the NAO an overview of what works well and allows us to identify trends relevant to specific sectors and across government. The NAO works to identify and disseminate good practice through guidance, seminars, conferences and briefings and this material has been made available on the website. <http://www.nao.org.uk/guidanceindex.htm>

The Audit Commission The Commission is an independent public body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently, and effectively in the areas of local government, housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services. <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/>