

MEDIA RELEASE

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Support programmes prove invaluable as SAICA analyses latest ITC results

Johannesburg, Friday 26 February 2021 – With the release of results* for the second sitting of the 2020 Initial Test of Competence (ITC), the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) congratulates the 441 candidates who passed this qualifying exam. These candidates join the 2 149 candidates who passed in January to bring the total number of candidates who passed the 2020 ITC to 2 590.

The ITC is a standard setting examination that all prospective chartered accountants [CAs(SA)] write after completing their accredited post-graduate programme in order to assess how candidates apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained at university. Written twice a year, prospective CAs(SA) have several opportunities to pass the exam, which serves as the first of two SAICA Qualifying Examinations.

The majority of the second sitting consists of repeat candidates as well as those who either elect not to write in January or whose post graduate supplementary results had not yet been released before the ITC exam registration date closes.

With 22% (441 candidates) of candidates passing the second sitting, the result brings the total number of candidates who passed the 2020 ITC to 2 590 (2019: 2 761). This is the lowest pass rate that has been recorded for the ITC and is due to, amongst others, the unavoidable postponement of the second sitting from June to November due to COVID-19. This delay meant that majority of candidates had over 11 months instead of five months between exiting their university degree and writing the second sitting of the ITC. Since the ITC tests the integrated application of technical competence developed during the academic programme, SAICA acknowledges the impact of the postponement on candidates. In addition, stress caused by the pandemic and the challenges of working from home could have further impacted on candidates' performance.

SAICA, however, notes the following:

1. The transformation agenda remains a top priority

Although there was no significant differential between race groups and their throughput pass rates for this sitting of the ITC, closing the gap in the differentials in pass rates between race groups is a top priority. SAICA therefore remains committed to transforming the profession and continues to put different initiatives in place in order to support candidates as well as gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for these differential pass rates. The ultimate aim

is both continuing to increase the number of African and Coloured candidates writing the exam as well as improving equivalence in pass rates.

2. Support programmes are crucial to candidates' success

An analysis of the successful cohort reveals that of the 441 candidates who passed, 363 were Black with 285 of these Black candidates being African and Coloured.

Of the African and Coloured candidates who were successful in the second ITC sitting, 186 candidates passed as a result of the FASSET-funded Thuthuka ITC Repeat Programme, one of SAICA's many programmes driving transformation within the profession.

This programme, open to African and Coloured students who failed the January sitting, assists candidates in better preparing for the second sitting. The intensive programme gives candidates the opportunity to participate in lectures, write tests, and practice assessments in the weeks leading up to the ITC. The programme also includes a mentoring and coaching element to support these candidates during their study programme.

In addition to this programme, SAICA also expresses its gratitude to partners like the Association for the Advancement of Black Accountants of SA (ABASA) and the African Women Chartered Accountants (AWCA) for collaborating on various support intervention projects that work towards the achievement of the profession's ambitious transformation goals.

3. COVID-19

As the first of two qualifying examinations, the ITC is a high stakes exam for aspiring CAs(SA). For this reason, the exam is venue-based in order to ensure that technology limitations, load shedding and other challenges do not in any way disadvantaged candidates or impact the integrity of the exam. However, due to the restrictions on gatherings in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year SAICA took additional precautions to ensure the safety of all those who wrote. In addition to sticking to strict numbers for each venue, SAICA also provided all examination candidates with co-morbidities and those considered high-vulnerability with hotel rooms to write their examination in to ensure their isolation from larger crowds and prevent the sharing of washrooms.

Commenting on the results, Freeman Nomvalo, SAICA CEO says: *"I would like to acknowledge all those candidates who wrote the ITC and extend a special note of congratulations to those who passed – particularly as they had to overcome significant challenges to do so. I trust that these candidates will hold themselves to the same high standards of excellence as they progress towards their final qualifying exam, the Assessment of Professional Competence. To those who were unsuccessful in this sitting, I encourage you to continue to work hard and not to give up. As prospective CAs(SA) you have several opportunities to pass this exam and there are support programmes available to assist you."*

* Detailed ITC statistics can be found on the SAICA website (www.saica.co.za/examinations).

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Note to the Editor

About SAICA

SAICA, South Africa's pre-eminent accountancy body, is widely recognised as one of the world's leading accounting institutes. The Institute provides a wide range of support services to more than 46 000 members and associates who are chartered accountants [CAs(SA)], as well as associate general accountants (AGAs(SA)) and accounting technicians (ATs(SA)), who hold positions as CEOs, MDs, board directors, business owners, chief financial officers, auditors and leaders in every sphere of commerce and industry, and who play a significant role in the nation's highly dynamic business sector and economic development.

Chartered Accountants are highly valued for their versatile skill set and creative lateral thinking, that's why the top 100 Global Brands all employ Chartered Accountants*.

*Source: CAW, 2020 – Interbrand, Best Global Brands 2019

About the Thuthuka Bursary Fund and Education Upliftment Project

One of SAICA's prime goals is to contribute towards strengthening the country's economy by playing a significant and leading role in transformation and skills development. The Thuthuka Education Upliftment Project, a pioneering initiative to promote transformation in the profession, was launched in the Eastern Cape in 2002 and is, today, a well-established successful national transformation initiative.

Thuthuka's objective is to transform the demographics of the profession to reflect those of the country in terms of race and gender, and provide educational support to African learners and students for the benefit of the profession, while simultaneously helping to uplift communities. Therefore, SAICA prides itself in leading the chartered accountancy profession as a socially responsible driver of business and skills development by also further supporting and encouraging enterprise development initiatives.

What is the ITC and what does it measure?

The ITC examination is the first of two SAICA professional Qualifying Examinations that university graduates must pass to become a CA(SA). Written twice a year, the ITC tests the integrated application of technical competence that candidates develop during the academic programme (which consists of a three-year undergraduate programme and a one-year postgraduate programme). The ITC assesses how well a candidate evaluates the underlying problems in each scenario and, through logical thinking, applies the theoretical knowledge they have gained at university.

To pass, candidates must obtain an overall pass mark of 50% (and must get a sub-minimum of at least 40% in three of the four professional papers).

About the Thuthuka ITC Repeat Programme

The Thuthuka ITC Repeat Programme is an intensive programme offered through the University of Cape Town, the Gauteng Board Course and Endunamoo. Eligible African and Coloured candidates can be accommodated on the fully-funded programme where they participate in lectures, write weekly tests, and practice assessments. The programme also includes a mentoring and coaching element.

SAICA Media Contact

Ms Karin Jacobsen
Project Manager: Marketing and Communications
SAICA Nation Building Division
Tel: 011 621 6913
Email: karinj@saica.co.za

Mr Kulani Chauke
Corporate Communications Co-Ordinator, Marketing & Communications (SAICA)
Tel: 011 479 0698
Email: kulanic@saica.co.za