

SAICA CEO ROADSHOWS SOUTH AFRICA AND ASPAC REGION 30 August 2021

The questions below were raised by members before the CEO Roadshow for members residing in South Africa and the ASPAC region. The answers were given by the relevant executives.

MEMBER VALUE

- 1. What role is SAICA playing to assist accountants (including Chartered Accountants) that have been retrenched? A number of my former colleagues and I were retrenched from the SABC at the end of March 2021 after many years of working there. We are now in the job market and there is no acknowledgement of our years of experience. There is nobody who you can engage regarding what you are going through and in the job market, you are competing with people that do not have jobs as well as people that do have jobs. This is concerning as you know you still have so much value to add.**

SAICA has entered into an MOU with SARS that has resulted in various career opportunities being made available for trainees, recently qualified CAs(SA) as well as experienced CAs(SA). Details were circulated in an email to members on 19 August 2021 and the SARS vacancies, as well as other vacancies, can also be found on the [SAICA website](#).

SAICA will further be hosting a Virtual Career Network during September 2021 that will explore various non-traditional career pathways that CAs(SA) in particular can take advantage of. The content will also be available on a dedicated career portal of the SAICA website, which will be updated as the series continues into 2022.

Unemployed members who face difficulty in meeting their annual subscription obligations can take advantage of SAICA's Concession Policy. Concessions are considered on an annual basis and members who meet the criteria are granted fee relief. Members can apply for concession by completing the online form on the [Member Portal](#).

- 2. Why does SAICA not have reciprocal membership with other prestigious accounting bodies such as ACCA?**

SAICA generally only enters into reciprocal agreements with bodies who seek this with us, meaning they approach us, or in countries where we have a significant number of members and where it is beneficial to them. It costs money to enter into and maintain these agreements, so we want to make sure it is done in a way that will add the most value to our members.

SAICA has never been approached by the ACCA for a recognition agreement.

Should they approach us, we will follow the normal process in terms of SAICA's policy, which includes a mutual evaluation of each body's qualification, and, if the body meets SAICA's requirements, we will negotiate the terms of the agreement.

3. Is there any hope of SARS updating its systems in the next 2 years? They are completely and utterly broken and outdated and doing our work as tax practitioners are becoming almost impossible. I know SAICA has signed an MOU and offered to supply some CAs(SA).

SARS has publicly acknowledged that they have fallen behind in their IT modernisation project. SARS has partly attributed this to a large number of employees, more than 2 000, which included a multitude of IT staff, that exited the organisation in the 2013-2018 period. In recognition of this challenge, an additional R3bn was allocated in the Feb 2021 Budget for this purpose. SARS has also been on an enhanced recruitment drive with more than 300 positions advertised earlier this year. SAICA, however, does believe that enhanced accountability at SARS, which we continue to advocate for, is also required as all problems cannot be attributed to old challenges. We believe that when new IT developments have a serious impact on taxpayers due to bad testing or implementation, there should be accountability. This situation is also not assisted with the AGILE design methodology SARS uses as such methodology relies on user testing and bug reporting. Given the significant impact SARS' systems have on taxpayers; this approach may not be desirable for a tax collection system.

Kindly note that the SARS MOU relates only to employment opportunities for CAs(SA) to work at SARS to help capacitate the revenue service in terms of scarce skills that SARS is battling to find. It does not talk about fixing IT challenges or old IT systems.

4. It is tough out there. How is SAICA supporting Associate General Accountants' practices?

SAICA has a seat on the National Small and Medium Practices Forum, where we advocate for all our members' needs.

In addition, all SAICA resources, which include online learning, webinars, and networking events, are available to our AGA practitioners. These resources can be accessed on the [SAICA website](#).

5. The threats of cybercrime present a moral dilemma for IT practitioners. How is SAICA assisting as an accountancy industry body to develop an ethics code and to regulate the conduct of ICT professionals? SAICA should seek to assist in leading this as part of its collaborative effort with other industry bodies?

SAICA will evaluate this request and approach the necessary IT associations to investigate the possibility of implementing this suggestion.

6. Given the recent social unrest, what is SAICA doing currently to support members who are active economic development players, and entrepreneurs in various sectors mainly?

At SAICA, we see our members as well as ourselves as leaders in the economy – individuals who can make a difference in society to better the lives of everyone. It is our duty to do what we can to alleviate the emotional and physical hardship that South Africans have been subjected to. As members, we need to be a part of the solution and make a difference where we can.

Following member requests and engagement with the SAICA Eastern Region Council, which is based in Kwazulu-Natal, SAICA leadership launched an initiative to help not only our members but also individuals who can benefit from our members' expertise to rebuild their business and deal with the emotional and mental stress they are currently facing.

The campaign is called [Difference Makers: Business Emergency Rescue](#), and contains various elements, for which you can find more detail by following the link to the SAICA website. This has also been communicated to members throughout August.

However, to answer your question directly, the SAICA Business Emergency Room forms part of this initiative and is aimed at assisting businesses that have been impacted by the recent turbulence in South Africa.

This initiative calls on business people to participate as part of a voluntary panel of business advisory experts, offering temporary pro-bono support to businesses in response to the current economic strain and its repercussions on society.

In turn, businesses will have an opportunity to apply for support from the panel of business advisory experts.

It is important to note that the service remains purely an advisory service and not an implementation service. In addition, participation will be on a pro-bono basis for a limited period. Business experts who are will help, can sign up [here](#).

Businesses who would like to apply for support through the Business Emergency Room can do so [here](#).

The specialist areas of advisory are as follows:

- SASRIA Insurance claims
- Cash flow management
- Funding/Grants/Incentives applications
- Business strategy for uncertain times
- Business diversification
- Taking new products/services to market
- Business processes/Business Continuity Processes
- Business rescue
- Sector-specific advice
- General business coaching

We further realise that a number of our members, their employees, and their clients are struggling following the riots, and therefore we have reached an agreement with the Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS) to offer emotional resilience sessions. Members can ask for counselling regarding emotional trauma, loss of employment, loss of businesses, and other matters that resulted from the unrest. These sessions for members only are offered telephonically. Members can call the toll-free number 0800 213 174 to consult with an ICAS counsellor.

We have also hosted several Wellness Check-In webinars, as well as a session to assist members with SASRIA claims, the recordings of which can be found on the [SAICA website](#).

We will further be hosting an Economic Recovery Conference in September, the details of which will be shared with our members soon.

We encourage members to read the SAICA newsletters and emails or visit the SAICA website for more information in this regard.

7. What role can CAs play in addressing inequality and poverty in South Africa?

In 2015, world leaders gathered at the UN to adopt an ambitious framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets to address the full range of social and economic development issues facing people around the world.

The SDGs are built on the five Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership and it is only by working on each of these that we will be able to overcome the many challenges we as a country face.

The SDGs allow us to collaborate more sharply, more effectively and more deliberately in leaving no one behind. If we wish to remain relevant within the global community, we need to work together and invest in education, training, reskilling and new skills, to be able to cope with the challenges of the future. Those who suffer most from poverty or exclusion, those who have been left behind and who have no access to development, peace, or respect and dignity look unto us, as leaders, with hope for a better tomorrow.

To help you join this journey and take action, SAICA has created a project called #SustainableSA where we work in collaboration with strategic partners and experts to provide focused, monthly information on each of the 17 SDGs. Recognising the fact that action only achieves results when it is informed, measured, reported on and rewarded, #SustainableSA provides:

- Regular updates on South Africa's status on achieving each SDG
- Education
- Highlights of key actions needed to be taken
- Relevant tips and tools for reporting, and
- Awards for outstanding contributions made by both companies and individuals towards achieving the SDGs

In South Africa, we have 'pockets of expertise' on the SDGs and we want to bring these together, to share their wisdom on a consolidated platform, to enable the transformation of decision-making, and to enable more resilient and sustainable businesses models.

If you are not already on this journey, we invite you to join us and we look forward to sharing more information and interacting with you through our monthly #SustainableSA updates, articles, tips, podcasts and webinars.

We further encourage members to get involved with the various projects SAICA is working on through the SAICA Enterprise Development, The Hope Factory as well as the Thuthuka entities, which all touch on the SDGs. More information on these entities can be found on the [SAICA website](#).

8. I am a Registered Auditor under huge pressure and unfair regulation. However, many clients are not IRBA registered but are SAICA accredited, but these same clients get away with unprofessional behaviour. I am not referring to the big hitters but rather the everyday accountant, financial director, small business practitioner. As only 10% of SAICA members are IRBA members, and highly regulated, what is SAICA doing to control their members, outside of IRBA governance? In my experience, many members do not act ethically and it is not my job to report on them. I have no obligation.

SAICA continues to take the ethical standing of all its members seriously as it is core to the profession and what it stands for. In this regard, the Integrated Ethics Plan was adopted and approved by the SAICA Board. This plan addresses ethics from the beginning of our member value chain of students and trainees to current members. It includes education, CPD interventions, compelled reflection, professional self-reflection events like Courageous

Conversations, as well as improved disciplinary processes and enhanced sanctions over the last few years. It also includes the implementation of ethical standards prescribed by standard setters like IESBA and SARS which have significantly expanded ethical requirements. The global profession has also sought to address this problem when it introduced the NOCLAR (Non-compliance of laws and regulations) in 2017, which SAICA also adopted and communicated to all members at the time. NOCLAR is an escalation framework built on the principle that members of the profession cannot turn a blind eye or just walk away when they notice wrongdoing, but must take active steps as set out in the framework to address non-compliance. This obligation is on all professional accountants, therefore all SAICA members, and requires members to document what steps they took when they became aware of NOCLAR. Non-compliance with the framework is in itself a contravention of the SAICA Code of Professional Conduct. You can find more information and guidance on NOCLAR [here](#).

9. Is any work being done to ensure that audit firm trainees earn better salaries in comparison to graduates with similar honours in the market?

SAICA does not become involved in matters that relate to the employment contracts of our trainees, which includes salary negotiations and recruitment criteria. SAICA does however do a salary survey and publishes these results for all training offices annually.

There are indeed a wide range of salaries offered for training contracts – often impacted by the training office size, sector and geographical location as well as the type of contract offered and entry requirements (3-, 4- and 5-year contracts for trainees with different levels of academic qualifications on entry).

When one compares it to the Commerce and Industry salaries, one comes across much stricter terms and conditions for entry, for example, Commerce and Industry offices tend to only offer contracts to trainees with a CTA (i.e. they are eligible to write the ITC) and who meet other qualifying criteria.

Salaries are only one component of the cost of running the training programme and offering a training contract. Just like accrediting a wide range of academic programmes allows access for students from a variety of backgrounds, similarly accrediting a wide range of training offices allows wider access to trainees.

It remains the trainee's responsibility to ensure his employment contract is fair and on par with market-related positions.

10. Who is representing SAICA on the East Rand? Does an East Rand regional association exist and if so, where do they publicise their activities? An organisation, which appears to run without the support of SAICA, is operating as if it is officially representing members on the East Rand. Can the CEO comment please?

An active East Rand Committee exists, which consists of seven members and is chaired by Vincent Mamefja. SAICA is in the process of ensuring that committee activities from all districts are publicised to members and that a summary of discussions at each meeting is available to members shortly afterwards.

SAICA is aware of a group of members who meet regularly on the East Rand. SAICA encourages members to meet, organise and network amongst themselves for the betterment of the profession, but it has to be noted that the group you are referring to does not officially represent SAICA or any of its members.

11. Is SAICA still associated with IRBA and what is your honest opinion on the happenings at IRBA and its future in SA?

SAICA communicated to members the day after the media first reported the news about the IRBA Board being dissolved. In addition, the CEO wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance to express SAICA's concern, to ask that he must find ways to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, and also to offer support in this matter. SAICA can only communicate the information it has on hand. Shortly after news broke of the IRBA board dissolution, the IRBA CEO resigned. SAICA also communicated our stance to members and the media in this regard. SAICA urges members to read SAICA's communication that is shared via emails and newsletters, SAICA social media, the Accountancy SA magazine and the SAICA website.

SAICA will continue to collaborate with other stakeholders and decision-makers in support of finding an efficient resolution of the leadership of IRBA as we view the regulator's role as critical in rebuilding the public's trust in the auditing profession. It is also important to note that the IRBA is SAICA's regulator and we will therefore continue to support not only our members who are RAs with any matters relevant to the IRBA, but also IRBA itself to ensure the ongoing stability of the organisation to restore and safeguard the reputation of the auditing profession.

12. Can SAICA please consider availing its members once more for the upcoming elections? I enjoyed volunteering the last time.

SAICA is awaiting confirmation of the date of the upcoming elections. Once that is known we will evaluate if we can facilitate this initiative again. Our decision will be based on the availability of the necessary resources to manage the preparations for this initiative. We will inform members once the decision has been made.

RELEVANCE AND REPUTATION

13. What measures will SAICA be introducing to restore the reputation of the CA(SA) qualification and designation and to restore the confidence and trust of the business world in the qualification?

Since the first allegations against some of our members surfaced in the media in 2017, SAICA has been working continuously on an integrated trust reconstruction strategy, which consists of several elements outlined below:

SAICA's Trust Reconstruction Strategy

SAICA takes the perception and reputation of the profession seriously, which is why we have continued to implement a consolidated Trust Reconstruction plan for 2021. This plan, which is now called the Integrated SAICA Brand Management and Communication Plan, focuses mostly on key initiatives which are underpinned by the SAICA strategy and the current media landscape. The key initiatives include, among others, an Integrated Ethics initiative, an Audit Reform initiative, as well as an initiative to professionalise the public sector.

The Integrated Ethics plan, in particular, is aimed at starting critical ethics conversations in SAICA's various spheres of influence, while taking into consideration the four pillars that impact the development of ethics competence:

- Ethical leadership

- Ethical organisation culture
- Professionalism
- Ethics education is aimed at cultivating necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours (attitudes)

To further demonstrate SAICA's commitment to supporting those that do the right thing even when no one is looking, SAICA has recently launched an [Ethics podcast](#). The podcast is hosted by Mpho Mookapele, 2019 Top 35 under 35 winner, where she talks to whistleblowers about the courage it took to do the right thing in the most challenging and sometimes life-threatening circumstances.

In addition, in April 2021 SAICA implemented a compulsory CPD requirement for members to undertake reflection on the competency area 'Ethical values and attitudes' on an annual basis and record this on their reflective plan. This was communicated to all members on 6 April 2021 in a bulk email, via a [Circular](#) and in the April ASA magazine.

SAICA further has an Ethics committee that provides leadership and guidance on ethics-related matters to SAICA and its members, so that they can comply with their responsibilities to act in the public interest, with integrity, objectivity, professional competence, due care, confidentiality, and compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. Members can read more about the Ethics Committee on the [SAICA website](#).

In 2020, the SAICA CEO met with various media editors and senior journalists to ensure that SAICA's work and approach to rebuilding trust in the profession were properly communicated. SAICA achieved a total of 1725 external media exposures in 2020, of which 92 exposures were negative, meaning that the 1633 positive exposures far outweigh the negative.

Measuring trust and admiration

Furthermore, SAICA monitors, on an annual basis, the impact of external market factors as well as the effect of its brand reputation management on the reputation of the CA(SA) designation, using independent brand research conducted by Ask Afrika among business decision-makers across all sectors of the business market in South Africa.

The lead indicators and lag measures to monitor the market standing of our designations are:

- Lead Indicators:
 - Spontaneous Awareness
 - Preference in employers
 - Net promoter score (NPS) (NPS is the rating of respondents to encourage their children to become a CA(SA))
- Lag measures:
 - Trust Index
 - Admiration Index

Here is a breakdown of the performance of these lead indicators and lag measures from 2017 before any alleged malfeasance, and how these criteria have moved since:

Criteria	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target 2025
Spontaneous awareness	86%	85%	87%	90%	90%
Preference in employees	72%	68%	67%	74%	75%
Net promoter score	45%	28%	36%	37%	45%
Trust Index	Not measured	75%	80%	84%	85%
Admiration Index	76%	66%	68%	68%	75%

What these criteria illustrate are that from 2017 to 2018 when all the negative publicity started occurring, all the indicators, except awareness, have declined. Since 2019, the lead indicators have recovered as a result of SAICA's Trust Reconstruction Strategy which constitutes our brand reputation management activities.

The important lead indicators have risen since 2018 despite ongoing historical and new negative publicity.

The lag measure that has not indicated satisfactory growth in the last two years is the admiration index which is arguably the most important measure of the standing of the CA(SA) brand among business decision-makers.

This is because the historical and new negative publicity still impacts the CA(SA) designation's admiration measure despite the positive trend in the other lead indicators.

SAICA has also taken part in an international Trust survey with Chartered Accountants Worldwide, which was conducted by Edelman International. The survey evaluates the trust in the accountancy sector for chartered accountants among business decision-makers on a global basis.

The 2021 survey was the third wave of the survey that Chartered Accountants Worldwide took part in, with the first two waves taking place in 2018 and 2019. SAICA participated in the 2018 survey but did not partake in the 2019 survey and no survey was done in 2020.

The 2021 survey was conducted amongst 1 450 business decision-makers within businesses in the following countries: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The South African survey was done among 200 business decision-makers. Globally, South Africa was the strongest performing country.

- **Trust in Chartered Accountants** proves more resilient than the profession more broadly, strengthening across most markets. The global average for trust in chartered accountants was 78%, while trust in South African CAs(SA) improved to 85%.
- **Trust in CA bodies** also remains high across markets, with a global average of 77% trust in CA bodies, with SAICA coming out on top with 86% (from 78% in 2018).

SAICA will communicate more information regarding the outcome of the Edelman survey in October when we will participate in an international event organised by Chartered Accountants Worldwide regarding trust in the profession.

Looking ahead

SAICA is confident that over time the CA(SA) brand admiration will improve due to its trust reconstruction activities. This will however be slow or static while new negative publicity continues to surface on an ongoing basis.

Therefore, SAICA believes that the perception of the CA(SA) brand is improving and is not as dire as members may believe. SAICA will continue to pro-actively manage the reputation of the CA(SA) designation. It is also important for members to be positive about their designation, as members are the most powerful drivers of the CA(SA) designation's positive brand reputation.

It remains SAICA's priority and responsibility to do all we can to ensure our members can deal with the ethical situations they may face and that members are properly supported and to hold to account those who bring the profession into disrepute. Secondly, we must create a positive perception of the institute and the CA(SA) designation in the marketplace, by ensuring the role the profession plays in society and the fact that SAICA members are true difference makers in the South African economy, is communicated effectively and that the positive publicity will always outweigh the negative publicity.

SAICA further prides itself on the fact that the CA(SA) designation compares with the best in the world. Judging by the work we've done through the [CA2025 programme](#) to ensure our CAs(SA) are fit for the future, as well as our reciprocity agreements with international accountancy bodies and our work with IFAC, as well as the results of the Edelman research, we undoubtedly compare favourably against the world's best.

14. Could we have averted the reputational damage to the profession and if so what could have been done?

No, SAICA could not have averted the reputational damage to the profession, given that each individual CA(SA) still has to take responsibility for his or her actions.

As you know, all SAICA members are subject to the SAICA Code of Professional Conduct, which is built on the fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

Although SAICA follows a disciplinary process and investigates all allegations against its members, SAICA cannot determine or influence each decision every individual member makes. SAICA can, however, give the relevant guidance through its various learning opportunities and its Integrated Ethics Plan, to equip our members to make the right decisions and act with integrity, even when no one is looking.

Regardless of whether the reputational damage could have been averted or not, SAICA will continue implementing its strategy to restore trust in the CA profession, as mentioned in the answer to the previous question.

15. Where and what is the status of the Ntsebeza inquiry?

In November 2017, SAICA convened the Ntsebeza Inquiry, which aimed to independently investigate allegations that some of the Institute's members who were/are employed by KPMG, had allegedly engaged in conduct in contravention of the SAICA Code of Professional Conduct. SAICA publishes a quarterly disciplinary update and in respect of the Ntsebeza Inquiry, we reported the following:

The Inquiry report recommended disciplinary action against seven members and the following feedback can be given in this regard:

- Jacques Wessels was excluded from membership by the Disciplinary Committee (DC) in May 2019;
- Two further cases against members of the KPMG audit team have been finalised by the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) but the members have exercised their right to have the matter referred to the Disciplinary Committee for hearing;
- Two cases are ongoing before the PCC;
- Two cases are with the IRBA for finalisation.

The IRBA attended to the investigation of KPMG as a firm, which would include looking into the conduct of senior employees and SAICA, therefore, cannot comment on this investigation, as SAICA only has jurisdiction over individual CAs(SA) and not firms. When the IRBA concludes a disciplinary case against a registered auditor who is also a member of SAICA, SAICA records the outcome of the IRBA disciplinary case on the SAICA member's disciplinary record.

16. What is the plan for SAICA to hold individuals more accountable as it appears to not sufficiently punish individuals who bring the profession into disrepute?

As part of SAICA's integrated trust reconstruction strategy, the SAICA By-laws have been revised. This was done with the help of a significant number of members who gave input, as well as engagement with legal advisors and the SAICA Social and Ethics Committee.

After months of consultation with various stakeholders, the By-laws were rewritten in respect of discipline, which is now contained as a Disciplinary Code (Appendix 4 to the By-laws).

The Board approved the revised SAICA By-laws in April 2020, and it came into effect on 1 June 2020. You can find the revised By-laws on the [SAICA website](#).

The new Disciplinary Code addresses the previous concerns by:

- Enabling the CEO to respond to the media on allegations of member misconduct after allowing the member a 48-hour right of response;
- Enabling the publication of the outcomes of all disciplinary cases where a member is found guilty, by way of quarterly reports setting out the name of the member; details of the offense and the sanction imposed. The [quarterly reports](#) are published on the SAICA website;
- Speedy resolution of complaints by providing for separate disciplinary streams: less serious matters go through the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) stream and serious matters are directed straight to the Disciplinary Committee (DC) stream;
- The early distinction between serious and lesser complaints make it possible to follow more appropriate process flows towards faster outcomes;
- Introduction of a schedule with guidelines on appropriate Fines for lesser offenses and an Admission of Guilt option to shorten the process before the PCC;

- Authorising the PCC to determine whether a current member is still Fit and Proper to retain membership of SAICA where a competent Court judgement or an IRBA disciplinary finding is made against the member;
- Allowing without prejudice discussions between SAICA and the member to narrow the issues in dispute and to submit settlement proposals to the Disciplinary Committee for approval;
- Reduction of the cost of processing the complaints; and
- Recovery of costs from members found guilty of misconduct.

In complaints where the member has been found guilty of serious breaches of the SAICA By-laws and Code, the Disciplinary Committee is authorised to impose suspension, exclusion and/or disqualification from membership as well as to impose Fines up to an amount of five hundred thousand rand per charge.

SAICA further responds to media inquiries regarding our disciplinary processes and we monitor the media daily to ensure we are aware of all public allegations against our members. It should be noted that SAICA investigates all allegations against our members without fear or favour. However, SAICA does not comment publicly or share details on any ongoing disciplinary matters, as it may obstruct the administration of justice. However, once matters have been finalised, they are communicated to members via a quarterly report (as mentioned above) which is published on the website.

Furthermore, in 2020, SAICA achieved 156 positive media exposures (which amounted to approximately R4 million in advertising value) on our disciplinary hearings outcomes.

17. In recent developments it is becoming apparent that there are some experienced CAs(SA) who are being implicated in corruption in South Africa. What is SAICA's opinion on this? Is it a lack of ethics diminishing and CPD requirements being more relaxed on ethics? I think for more experienced CAs(SA), ethics CPD needs to be made compulsory and less technical. Also, the general view shared by my peers outside of SAICA looking inward, is that the institute seems less action-oriented in holding these CAs(SA) to account and just releasing statements on what it will do.

While it may be true that CAs are from time to time implicated in corruption, this group represents a small minority of our members.

We note our members' concern that we do not always react immediately and/or publicly to these allegations, but rest assured that SAICA takes all allegations or revelations relating to potential misconduct extremely seriously. We monitor the media (including social media) daily and SAICA initiates investigations into member conduct either after receiving a complaint or because we have decided, based on the information available to us, that a potential breach of the Code may have occurred.

As you will know, over the last two years we have invested heavily in our capacity to investigate complex cases and conduct a professional disciplinary process, as indicated in question 16 above.

Regarding your concern about SAICA not being action-oriented in our disciplinary process, we

can assure you that SAICA follows due process and investigates all cases without fear or favour and in line with South African legislation rules. The initial investigation phase, in which SAICA gathers factual evidence, testimony and conducts relevant due diligence, is confidential. In the interests of procedural fairness and as prescribed in the SAICA by-laws, SAICA does not comment publicly, either in traditional media or on social media, on any member who is the subject of an investigation or media commentary during this phase. This protects the reputation of the individual members involved (who may well be innocent) and also safeguards third parties who may be mentioned in a complaint but who have no opportunity, as non-members, to explain themselves during our disciplinary process.

If an investigation concludes and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a member may have breached the SAICA Code, that member will then be charged under the relevant section of the Code. At that point the process becomes public, should the CEO deem it appropriate. This is in line with the SAICA By-laws. The member will have the opportunity to appear before an independent committee (either the Professional Conduct Committee or the Disciplinary Committee), chaired by a senior lawyer, generally an advocate, or a retired judge. All cases before the Disciplinary Committee are open to the public unless the independent chair finds extraordinary circumstances that require the case to be heard *in camera* (private). The findings of these committees are also published where there is a guilty finding. Details of past cases, findings and pending hearings can be found in the Governance and Discipline section on the [SAICA website](#).

It is also important to note that SAICA is continuously implementing an integrated trust reconstruction strategy and plan, as indicated in question 13 above. This plan includes numerous activities, one of which is the Integrated Ethics Plan which focuses on the cultivation of ethics competence through various ethics initiatives inculcating the four strategic pillars that impact the development of ethics competence:

- ethical leadership
- ethical organisational culture
- professionalism; and
- ethics education aimed at cultivating necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours (attitudes).

The Integrated Ethics Plan is holistic and encompasses a large range of initiatives, covering the development of ethics competence to enable members to make ethical decisions when faced with an ethical dilemma, the monitoring of ethics compliance, providing member support to facilitate compliance, advocacy initiatives not only amongst members but also government structures and schools, technical support for members, providing structures such as whistle-blowing lines and thought leadership initiatives to promote ethical awareness across all SAICA's spheres of influence.

Furthermore, the GIBS Ethics Barometer launched in 2020 for trainees, and students beginning 2021, and the fully qualified SAICA member survey is currently underway. The GIBS Ethics Barometer survey provides SAICA with critical data in terms of the perception of our members regarding the ethical climate in their various industries. This in turn informs our ethics management strategy.

The new CPD policy further includes compulsory CPD reflection on ethics, values and attitudes for all members, as communicated to all members in April 2021. You can find more information in [Circular 02/2021](#) which is accessible in the CPD section on the SAICA website.

Several training interventions have been rolled out during the year to provide members with the necessary guidance on “How to reflect on ethics”, including a reflection journal for the reflection on business ethics, personal ethics and professional ethics.

The reflection on Ethics and values are a robust process that is aimed at cultivating ethics competence for all members. Detailed learning outcomes have been formulated for all members and can be found in the new [CA2025 competency framework](#). The new learning outcomes that all members should measure themselves against include:

- Carry out work in a manner that protects the public interest, the client, employer and other relevant stakeholders, and put these before one’s own interest;
- Evaluate the impact of different value systems implicit in, among others, religion, culture, social standing, economic status and personal experiences;
- Understand ethics theories (normative and applied) and apply relevant theories when solving personal ethical dilemmas or making personal ethical decisions;
- Evaluate the significance of ethics within the business environment, and how it is managed within an organisation, as part of its ethical organisational culture;
- Analyse the interrelationships between governance, ethics, work values and the law;
- Understand ethics theories (normative and applied) and apply relevant theories when solving business ethical dilemmas or making business ethical decisions.

The accreditation criteria for trainees was also amended to reflect this increased focus on the development of the ethics competence of our members. The new accreditation criteria now include the requirement that all training offices should have regular ethics discussions and provide evidence of actively cultivating an ethical culture. This is much more robust than the previous 8-hour ethics training requirement.

This is in line with the amended “Role and mindset” section in the SAICA Code of Professional Conduct which promotes the role, mindset and behavioural characteristics expected of all professional accountants when performing their professional activities.

18. With AI gaining more and more traction in the world, and automation increasing, do you still see a future for public practices in the distant future specifically and is accounting and auditing still a viable career for a scholar to pursue?

There is still very much a place for accountants and auditors in the future world of work, which is why SAICA has ensured that digital acumen is a key component of the CA2025 Competency Framework. It is correct that the face of accounting is changing and we need to keep pace with those changes by ensuring that we continue learning and relearning to remain relevant.

You can read more about the CA2025 Competency Framework [here](#).

19. How serious is the top leadership (the President and the Cabinet) about professionalising the Public Sector across all tiers of the government? Currently, the government is not employing people that are fit for purpose across all spheres of the Public Sector, especially at the Ministerial, Head of Department and Board Chairperson

level. Party politics should not take preference over ensuring service delivery to the citizens of the country. How can South African citizens ensure that State Capture does not occur in the future?

SAICA cannot speculate regarding the collective attitude of the country's political leadership towards professionalisation of the Public Sector.

SAICA does however engage with various governmental bodies regarding the professionalisation of the Public Sector to advocate for better service delivery.

20. When and how is SAICA going to inform the general public what our (the CAs(SA) in practice) actual responsibilities are? We are unable to check every entry processed yet when wrongdoings are uncovered the auditors get castigated and the perpetrators of the frauds are mere bystanders.

SAICA has published articles of this nature in the past and we will endeavor to do so again in the near future. Members should, however, note that these kinds of articles are not favoured as newsworthy items by the media and so we do experience challenges in getting the articles published.

GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

21. What is the direction of choices that one should make after completing their articles to be on the path to becoming a CEO? Is it just a matter of taking on jobs where there is diverse learning or is there a more strategic approach if the ultimate goal is to become a CEO?

SAICA has developed a Pathways to Relevance initiative, which lists some career pathways for professionals who hold the CA(SA) designation. You can find more guidance on how to manage your career on the [Pathways to Relevance](#) page on the SAICA website.

22. What is the true reason for the failure rate in predominantly African article clerks? Do you think APC courses are prepping candidates adequately? Are training offices not adequately supporting these candidates because it seems like there is a misalignment between SAICA and some of these structures?

How has SAICA from when the 23% pass rate was released to date afforded its services to remediate such?

Is there any pipeline assistance offered for candidates who have failed APC more than once who are now unemployed because they are not CAs(SA) but are too expensive to be ordinary accountants?

Is there a saturation of African CAs(SA) which could also explain the growing number of newly qualified CAs(SA) who are either underpaid by the market or unemployed?

As SAICA, we continue to be concerned about the declining pass rate for African candidates despite the numerous initiatives in this regard. It is intending to understand the root cause of the problems that SAICA commissioned a comprehensive, independent study to review the full value chain of the qualification process to find solutions. The study is looking at all aspects of education, both basic education and at the university level, and training. It is also looking at both of SAICA's qualifying exams (the ITC and APC), including the board courses and the findings of the study are expected at the beginning of 2022. The objective is to get a thorough

understanding of what is preventing candidates from succeeding, working out what the solutions are and developing initiatives to action change.

Given the nature of the study, it will take some time to reveal the exact problems and to develop a strategy to respond to them. It is for this reason that SAICA continues to put different initiatives in place to support candidates as well as gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for these differential pass rates. These initiatives include the newly established programmes that are providing immediate additional support to APC candidates.

As an organisation, we remain committed to transforming the profession. Together with all our stakeholders, including the Association for the Advancement of Black Accountants of Southern Africa (ABASA) and African Women Chartered Accountants (AWCA), we continue to collaborate on intervention projects to support candidates to close the inequality gap and ensure that no prospective CA(SA) is left behind.

With regards to your saturation question, kindly note that our database reveals that only 1.4% of SAICA members have indicated that they are currently unemployed for various reasons. However, as our database only tracks accountants who are registered CAs(SA) or associate members of SAICA (holding either the AGA(SA) or AT(SA) designations), we are unable to comment on the wider issue of unemployment in the broader accountancy profession. Please also note that prospective CAs(SA) who do not complete their qualification journey are given the opportunity to become associate members of SAICA through our various associate member engagements. This, in turn, assists them with finding employment in the marketplace as many companies look for accountants who are registered with a professional body such as SAICA when hiring.

ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

23. Will you insist that potential employees need to prove that they have had the COVID-19 vaccination before employing them?

Vaccinations are currently a hot topic, and understandably, there are various legal, ethical and human rights matters to take into account. Currently, SAICA is not insisting that its staff get vaccinated or that they need to prove that they have been vaccinated, however, we do follow strict COVID-19 protocols in our offices and in addition, the majority of our staff still work remotely to mitigate the risk of some staff members getting infected by the virus and subsequently spreading it to their colleagues.

We do not know what the future developments in this area will be, but SAICA will always take a measured approach in its decisions, keeping in mind what would be best for SAICA, its members, and the broader society.