

Careers in Accounting

The information explosion has increased the need for professionally educated accountants. Success in an accounting career requires skill in oral and written communications, the ability to work with others and the ability to think abstractly and solve problems logically.

Career Paths Available to Accounting Graduates:

- Public Practice
 - Business and Industry
 - Government
 - Not-For-Profit
 - Education
- Public Practice - There are over 46,000 public accounting firms in the U.S. ranging in size from small local accounting practices to large international CPA firms. Public accounting services include:
- Auditing
 - Assurance Services
 - Environmental Accounting
 - Forensic Accounting
 - Information Technology Services
 - International Accounting
 - Management Consulting Services
 - Personal Financial Planning
 - Tax Advisory Services
- Business and Industry - Accountants in business and industry work for companies ranging from family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 companies. They are considered strategic business partners of their organizations and work in a variety of different areas, including:
- Financial Management
 - Financial Reporting
 - Internal Auditing
 - Management Accounting
 - Non-Financial Positions
 - Tax Planning
- Government - CPAs in government have the opportunity to evaluate the efficiency of government department and agencies at the federal, state, and local levels as well as advise decision-makers in the use of entity resources.

At the federal level, accountants work for agencies such as Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of the Treasury and the General Accounting Office. They may be involved in investigating white-collar crime,

managing financial statement audits for government agencies, performing research and analysis on financial management issues, or testifying before legislative committees.

At the state and local level, accountants are involved in conducting financial, performance or compliance audits which may include analyzing a school district's ability to remain viable, the propriety of expenditures for constructing prisons, the effectiveness of the workers' compensations system, or the regulatory compliance of hazardous waste programs. The types of audits performed by accountants in government include:

- Performance auditing
 - Financial audits
 - Compliance audits
 - Investigative audits
- Not-For-Profit - Accountants in not-for-profit organizations provide the information these institutions need to determine that the benefits and services they provide do not exceed revenues. Whether an accountant is on the staff of a not-for-profit organization or serves in an advisory capacity, he or she can help the organization solve tax problems, set up an internal control system, budget resources, and prepare financial data for fund raising.
- Education -accounting educators are members of the faculties of colleges of business administration, professional schools of accountancy, graduate schools of business, and community colleges. Accounting faculty members instruct students in such areas as auditing, financial accounting, taxation, cost and managerial accounting, and professional ethics. In addition to teaching, educators conduct research to expand the body of accounting knowledge and author books and articles. Many educators also serve as business consultants to firms and expert witnesses in litigation situations.

Accounting Certification Services

After obtaining a college degree in accounting, many accountants seek additional certification. Obtaining certification shows employers that you have knowledge, skills and abilities needed to succeed in today's workplace. Those who plan a career in public accounting should seek certification as a certified public accountant (CPA). Becoming a CPA involves passing a rigorous examination and obtaining appropriate work experience. Although the CPA examination is the same throughout the U.S., each state determines the requirements for taking and passing the examination and obtaining necessary work experience. Accountants whose career paths lead to management accounting, government accounting, not-for-profit accounting, or education may find that one or more of the following certification programs are more suited for them:

- Certified in Management Accounting (CMA)
- Certified in Financial Accounting (CFM)
- Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)
- Certified Financial Planner (CFP)
- Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE)
- IRS Enrolled Agent (Special Enrollment Examination)

The 150-Hour Requirement

Many states are now requiring completion of 150-hours of college credit (rather than 120-hours) to qualify candidates to sit for the CPA examination. Under New York State law, 150-hours of education will be required of candidates beginning in August 2009. Like most states, New York does not require that a master's degree be earned. However, most students will find it advantageous to earn a graduate degree as they complete the required credits. Graduate - level programs are an excellent way to more fully develop communications and interpersonal skills while expanding technical knowledge. Students who complete a graduate education have a substantially higher rate of success on the Uniform CPA Examination and command starting salaries that are approximately 10 to 20 percent higher than those earned by accountants with only bachelor's degrees. Finally, there is evidence that promotions are increasingly going to individuals with master's degrees. Accounting seniors with a GPA of 3.0 or higher are encouraged to consider continuing their education and earning a graduate degree. The SUNY New Paltz MBA in accounting is a registered, licensure qualifying program under New York State's 150 credit rules.