

IM-P03 INFORMATION FOR ACCREDITED CONSULTING PRACTICES

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1 Purpose & Scope

This document sets out procedures for membership application and retention by Accredited Consulting Practices (ACPs) within the Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers (IMCA), covering both the initial application and ongoing annual affirmation processes.

2 Responsibility

These procedures are managed by the Membership Review Board (MRB) of IMCA.

3 Documentation & References

The key documents referred to in this procedure are set out below.

Ref.	Title	Online Version
IM-F01	Code of Professional Conduct	http://www.imca.ie/using-consultants/code-of-conduct/
IM-F02	Competency Framework	http://www.imca.ie/assets/files/Procedures/im-f02_competency_framework.pdf
IM-F03	Ethical Guidelines	http://www.imca.ie/assets/files/Procedures/im-f03_ethical_guidelines.pdf
IM-F12	ACP Annual Affirmation Form	http://www.imca.ie/assets/files/Procedures/im-f12_acp_annual_affirmation_form.pdf
IM-F17	ACP Member Application Form	http://www.imca.ie/become-a-member/apply-for-membership/?t=practice
IM-F19	Practice sign-up Form	http://www.imca.ie/become-a-member/practice-member/practice-sign-up-form/

4 Overview and Definitions

Accredited Consulting Practices are management consultancy practices whose training and other arrangements for the development of consultants working for their firms have been approved by the MRB of IMCA. They must be identifiable organisations or management units undertaking a management consultancy role and providing management consulting services.

Certified Management Consultant (CMC) is an internationally recognised management consultancy qualification based on strict certification requirements relating to competence, ethics and independence. Only members of ICMCI (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes) can award the CMC qualification. IMCA is a member of ICMCI and this procedure conforms to the ICMCI Standard for Accredited Consulting Practices (current Issue 1, Jan 2006).

Accredited Consulting Practices are required to have five or more full-time management consultants.

The IMCA has decided that applicants must have three years experience of full-time management consulting before being designated as a Member, CMC. Applicants need not, however, be an Associate member of IMCA for three years.

If the practice receives the Accredited Consulting Practice designation, then all management consultants with less than three years experience are enrolled as Associate members of IMCA

and those with more than three years experience become Members of IMCA and Certified Management Consultants (CMC).

The MRB considers whether the training and development of a management consultancy firm that applies for the Accredited Consulting Practice designation is equivalent to, or better than, the minimum required of an individual applicant to be a CMC.

The assumption is that the standards applied by the Accredited Consulting Practice will be at least equivalent to the standard sought from individual applicants. On being awarded the Accredited Consulting Practice designation:

- An online Practice sign-up Form (IM-F19) is completed for the practice and
- an ACP Member Application Form for each consultant, to which must be attached a CV, is completed in either online or downloaded (IM-F17) form.

The MRB may sample the CVs of CMC candidates from ACPs, to monitor any divergence or 'drift' of standards and if not satisfied can require the individual candidate to go through the full scrutiny process, as for direct CMC candidates.

Members retain their CMC status after leaving the ACP, subject to IMCA's requirements for individual members.

5 CMC Competence Requirements

The practice accredited must have all round competence as a management consultancy firm.

The practice must have a requirement that each management consultant within the practice undertakes 35 hours of continuous professional development each year.

The applicant for Accredited Consulting Practice designation must demonstrate that its consultants have:

- Values and behavioural skills;
- Technical competence; and
- Business insights.

The training of the management consultants in the firm should encompass the consultancy skills required in the Competency Framework (IM-F02). Equally, the consultants should be given training in management so that they can effectively manage resources within the organisation. The training given should also seek to create awareness among the partners and employees of the firm in relation to broader issues listed under business acumen.

6 IMCA Ethical Guidelines and Codes of Conduct

The MRB must be satisfied that part of the induction training and ongoing development relates to ethical issues (Ethical Guidelines IM-F03). While the Ethical Codes of larger organisations may be satisfactory, the IMCA guidelines must be followed in essence.

All persons (including employees of ACPs) joining the Institute as Associates or Members / CMCs are required to have read and to be committed to complying with the IMCA Code of Professional Conduct (IM-F01).

7 Professional Specialism

All members of the Institute are required to have:

- A primary degree, or
- A higher degree, or
- A relevant post-graduate vocation qualification or

- A qualification from a recognised professional institute, and/or,
- A portfolio of evidence of prior experiential learning which is accepted as the equivalent to one of the above, with at least five years full time experience in management consultancy in lieu of a degree.

One or more of the above must be relevant to the specialism of the primary work of the management consultant.

8 Assessment Process

The assessment follows a two-phase procedure as outlined below with an initial presentation by the practice followed up by an audit of their professional standards and processes.

8.1 Presentation by Applicant Practice

A presentation of the applicant practice's submission will be made to the MRB initially. This presentation should normally take 20 - 30 minutes and may use visual aids.

The practice should provide the MRB with a copy of the presentation in advance which will be sent to the members attending before the presentation - normally three. Following the presentation, the members will ask questions.

8.2 On-site audit of Professional Standards and Processes

The MRB audits the professional standards and processes applied by applicant practices as soon as possible after the initial presentation. The audit is carried out by one or more lead assessors from the MRB who report back to the other members for decision.

This audit is required by the ICMCI standard in order to give maximum assurance that CMC candidates from the ACP are of the required standard and that there is clear understanding between the Institute and the firm.

If an applicant ACP is already recognised as an ACP in another ICMCI member country, IMCA will liaise with the other institute and limit the scope of its audit correspondingly.

The on-the-ground audit should include discussions with relevant partners / senior staff in the firm covering: the firm's HR processes (including recruitment); code of professional conduct or the equivalent; training and development provisions; supervision and quality assurance; professional standard including competency framework (or equivalent), and assurance that it is at least the equivalent of the Institute's standard; and processes for assessment / grading / promotion of consultants.

During the audit, the level within the firm's assessment / grading / promotion structure that is the equivalent to the CMC qualification is identified and agreed.

Recommendations are documented, and communicated to management, on any areas of improvement identified as a result of the ACP assessment process.

Following the audit, the MRB will make its decision on whether to recommend to the Board of the Institute that the practice be designated as an Accredited Consulting Practice or not.

This audit is repeated after an interval of 3 years or less, before reconfirmation of ACP status. IMCA maintains a register of recognised ACPs and notifies each new ACP to ICMCI, which maintains an international register of recognised ACPs. Any withdrawal of ACP status will be immediately notified to ICMCI.

IMCA can, at its discretion, withdraw ACP status at any time. This would be the final sanction, applied only after an ACP has been warned of problems, and given every reasonable opportunity to rectify them. Reasons for withdrawal could be any major failure to continue to observe the requirements for ACP status, such as:

- Professional development to CMC level is no longer adequate;
- Standards are no longer equivalent to the CMC standard;
- Proposed individual CMC candidates are not well qualified.

9 Annual Affirmation

The Board of IMCA maintains an Annual Affirmation procedure for all grades of the Institute to: a) obtain an annual written undertaking to adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct b) obtain a statement that they are currently in practice and c) monitor the professional development activities undertaken.

For Accredited Consulting Practices:

- The practice makes an annual return with an affirmation (IM-F12) that all members currently in the practice are in compliance under a), b) and c) above;
- The practice also provides a list of joiners (with application form and CV) and leavers during the year;
- Associates and CMCs from ACPs are also required to make a personal Annual Affirmation (IM-F10) that they are in compliance under a), b) and c) above; and
- The MRB reviews the Accredited Consulting Practice returns as to compliance and signs off the forms stating they have been reviewed.

The Chairman of the MRB reports to Board annually on the Annual Affirmation process and makes recommendations on any instances of non-compliance.

10 Appeals Process

In the event of the Membership Review Board declining an application, the applicant can appeal this decision to the Board of the Institute by making their case in writing to the Secretary, Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers, 19 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

The President of IMCA will appoint a sub-committee of the Board who will review the appeal and make a recommendation to the IMCA Board on it. The sub-committee will be the highest point of appeal and its decisions will be final.