

# SA 210\*

## AGREEING THE TERMS OF AUDIT ENGAGEMENTS

*(Effective for all audits relating to accounting periods beginning on or after April 1, 2010)*

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Material Modifications to ISA 210, “Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements”

Appendix 1: Examples of an Audit Engagement Letter<sup>\*</sup>

Appendix 2: Determining the Acceptability of General Purpose Frameworks

Standard on Auditing (SA) 210, “Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements” should be read in the context of the “Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services<sup>1</sup>,” which sets out the authority of SAs and SA 200, “Overall Objectives of the Independent Auditor and the Conduct of an Audit in Accordance with Standards on Auditing”<sup>2</sup>.

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\* Readers may note that Appendix also includes the illustrative formats of the audit engagement letter under the Companies Act, 2013 issued by the Council of the Institute.

<sup>1</sup> Published in the July, 2007 issue of the Journal.

<sup>2</sup> Published in the March, 2010 issue of the Journal.

## **Introduction**

### **Scope of this SA**

1. This Standard on Auditing (SA) deals with the auditor's responsibilities in agreeing the terms of the audit engagement with management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance. This includes establishing that certain preconditions for an audit, responsibility for which rests with management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance, are present. SA 220<sup>3</sup> deals with those aspects of engagement acceptance that are within the control of the auditor. (Ref: Para. A1)

### **Effective Date**

2. This SA is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after April 1, 2010.

### **Objective**

3. The objective of the auditor is to accept or continue an audit engagement only when the basis upon which it is to be performed has been agreed, through:

- (a) Establishing whether the preconditions for an audit are present; and
- (b) Confirming that there is a common understanding between the auditor and management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance of the terms of the audit engagement.

### **Definitions**

4. For purposes of the SAs, the following term has the meaning attributed below:

Preconditions for an audit – The use by management of an acceptable financial reporting framework<sup>4</sup> in the preparation of the financial statements and the agreement of management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance to the premise<sup>5</sup> on which an audit is conducted.

5. For the purposes of this SA, references to "management" should be read hereafter as "management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance".

### **Requirements**

#### **Preconditions for an Audit**

6. In order to establish whether the preconditions for an audit are present, the auditor shall:

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<sup>3</sup> SA 220, "Quality Control for an Audit of Financial Statements", published in March, 2010 issue of the Journal.

<sup>4</sup> SA 200, "Overall Objectives of the Independent Auditor and the Conduct of an Audit in accordance with Standards on Auditing", paragraph 13 (a).

<sup>5</sup> SA 200, Paragraph 13 (j).

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- (a) Determine whether the financial reporting framework to be applied in the preparation of the financial statements is acceptable; and (Ref: Para. A2-A9)
- (b) Obtain the agreement of management that it acknowledges and understands its responsibility: (Ref: Para A10-A13, A19)
  - (i) For the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework, including where relevant their fair presentation; (Ref: Para. A14)
  - (ii) For such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and (Ref: Para. A15-A18)
  - (iii) To provide the auditor with:
    - a. Access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
    - b. Additional information that the auditor may request from management for the purpose of the audit; and
    - c. Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

***Limitation on Scope Prior to Audit Engagement Acceptance***

7. If management or those charged with governance impose a limitation on the scope of the auditor's work in the terms of a proposed audit engagement such that the auditor believes the limitation will result in the auditor disclaiming an opinion on the financial statements, the auditor shall not accept such a limited engagement as an audit engagement, unless required by law or regulation to do so.

***Other Factors Affecting Audit Engagement Acceptance***

8. If the preconditions for an audit are not present, the auditor shall discuss the matter with management. Unless required by law or regulation to do so, the auditor shall not accept the proposed audit engagement:

- (a) If the auditor has determined that the financial reporting framework to be applied in the preparation of the financial statements is unacceptable, except as provided in paragraph 19; or
- (b) If the agreement referred to in paragraph 6(b) has not been obtained.

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### **Agreement on Audit Engagement Terms**

9. The auditor shall agree the terms of the audit engagement with management or those charged with governance, as appropriate. (Ref: Para. A20)

10. Subject to paragraph 11, the agreed terms of the audit engagement shall be recorded in an audit engagement letter or other suitable form of written agreement and shall include: (Ref: Para. A21-A24)

- (a) The objective and scope of the audit of the financial statements;
- (b) The responsibilities of the auditor;
- (c) The responsibilities of management;
- (d) Identification of the applicable financial reporting framework for the preparation of the financial statements; and
- (e) Reference to the expected form and content of any reports to be issued by the auditor and a statement that there may be circumstances in which a report may differ from its expected form and content.

11. If law or regulation prescribes in sufficient detail the terms of the audit engagement referred to in paragraph 10, the auditor need not record them in a written agreement, except for the fact that such law or regulation applies and that management acknowledges and understands its responsibilities as set out in paragraph 6(b). (Ref: Para. A21, A25-A26)

12. If law or regulation prescribes responsibilities of management similar to those described in paragraph 6(b), the auditor may determine that the law or regulation includes responsibilities that, in the auditor's judgment, are equivalent in effect to those set out in that paragraph. For such responsibilities that are equivalent, the auditor may use the wording of the law or regulation to describe them in the written agreement. For those responsibilities that are not prescribed by law or regulation such that their effect is equivalent, the written agreement shall use the description in paragraph 6(b). (Ref: Para. A25)

### **Recurring Audits**

13. On recurring audits, the auditor shall assess whether circumstances require the terms of the audit engagement to be revised and whether there is a need to remind the entity of the existing terms of the audit engagement. (Ref: Para. A27)

### **Acceptance of a Change in the Terms of the Audit Engagement**

14. The auditor shall not agree to a change in the terms of the audit engagement where there is no reasonable justification for doing so. (Ref: Para. A28-A30)

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15. If, prior to completing the audit engagement, the auditor is requested to change the audit engagement to an engagement that conveys a lower level of assurance, the auditor shall determine whether there is reasonable justification for doing so. (Ref: Para. A31-A32)

16. If the terms of the audit engagement are changed, the auditor and management shall agree on and record the new terms of the engagement in an engagement letter or other suitable form of written agreement.

17. If the auditor is unable to agree to a change of the terms of the audit engagement and is not permitted by management to continue the original audit engagement, the auditor shall:

- (a) Withdraw from the audit engagement where possible under applicable law or regulation; and
- (b) Determine whether there is any obligation, either contractual or otherwise, to report the circumstances to other parties, such as those charged with governance, owners or regulators.

### **Additional Considerations in Engagement Acceptance**

#### ***Financial Reporting Standards<sup>6</sup> Supplemented by Law or Regulation***

18. If financial reporting standards established by an authorised or recognised standards setting organization are supplemented by law or regulation, the auditor shall determine whether there are any conflicts between the financial reporting standards and the additional requirements. If such conflicts exist, the auditor shall discuss with management the nature of the additional requirements and shall agree whether:

- (a) The additional requirements can be met through additional disclosures in the financial statements; or
- (b) The description of the applicable financial reporting framework in the financial statements can be amended accordingly.

If neither of the above actions is possible, the auditor shall determine whether it will be necessary to modify the auditor's opinion in accordance with SA 705<sup>7</sup>. (Ref: Para. A33)

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<sup>6</sup> Accounting Standards issued by the ICAI or Accounting Standards, notified by the Central Government by publishing the same as the Companies (Accounting Standards) Rules, 2006, or the Accounting Standards for Local Bodies issued by the ICAI, as may be applicable.

<sup>7</sup> Standard on Auditing (SA) 705, "Modifications to the Opinion in the Independent Auditor's Report"; published in February, 2010 issue of the Journal.

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***Financial Reporting Framework Prescribed by Law or Regulation—Other Matters Affecting Acceptance***

19. If the auditor has determined that the financial reporting framework prescribed by law or regulation would be unacceptable but for the fact that it is prescribed by law or regulation, the auditor shall accept the audit engagement only if the following conditions are present: (Ref: Para. A34)

- (a) Management agrees to provide additional disclosures in the financial statements required to avoid the financial statements being misleading; and
- (b) It is recognised in the terms of the audit engagement that:
  - (i) The auditor's report on the financial statements will incorporate an Emphasis of Matter paragraph, drawing users' attention to the additional disclosures, in accordance with SA 706<sup>8</sup>; and
  - (ii) Unless the auditor is required by law or regulation to express the auditor's opinion on the financial statements by using the phrases "present fairly, in all material respects", or "give a true and fair view" in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework, the auditor's opinion on the financial statements will not include such phrases.

20. If the conditions outlined in paragraph 19 are not present and the auditor is required by law or regulation to undertake the audit engagement, the auditor shall:

- (a) Evaluate the effect of the misleading nature of the financial statements on the auditor's report; and
- (b) Include appropriate reference to this matter in the terms of the audit engagement.

*Auditor's Report Prescribed by Law or Regulation*

21. In some cases, the law or regulation applicable to the entity prescribes the layout or wording of the auditor's report in a form or in terms that are significantly different from the requirements of SAs. In these circumstances, the auditor shall evaluate:

- (a) Whether users might misunderstand the assurance obtained from the audit of the financial statements and, if so,
- (b) Whether additional explanation in the auditor's report can mitigate possible

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<sup>8</sup> Standard on Auditing (SA) 706, "Emphasis of Matter Paragraphs and Other Matter Paragraphs in the Independent Auditor's Report", published in February, 2010 issue of the Journal.

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misunderstanding<sup>9</sup>.

If the auditor concludes that additional explanation in the auditor's report cannot mitigate possible misunderstanding, the auditor shall not accept the audit engagement, unless required by law or regulation to do so. An audit conducted in accordance with such law or regulation does not comply with SAs. Accordingly, the auditor shall not include any reference within the auditor's report to the audit having been conducted in accordance with SAs<sup>10</sup>. (Ref: Para. A35-A36)

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## **Application and Other Explanatory Material**

### **Scope of this SA** (Ref: Para. 1)

A1. Assurance engagements, which include audit engagements, may only be accepted when the practitioner considers that relevant ethical requirements such as independence and professional competence will be satisfied, and when the engagement exhibits certain characteristics<sup>11</sup>. The auditor's responsibilities in respect of ethical requirements in the context of the acceptance of an audit engagement and in so far as they are within the control of the auditor are dealt with in SA 220<sup>12</sup>. This SA deals with those matters (or preconditions) that are within the control of the entity and upon which it is necessary for the auditor and the entity's management to agree.

### **Preconditions for an Audit**

*The Financial Reporting Framework* (Ref: Para. 6(a))

A2. A condition for acceptance of an assurance engagement is that the criteria referred to in the definition of an assurance engagement are suitable and available to intended users<sup>13</sup>. Criteria are the benchmarks used to evaluate or measure the subject matter including, where relevant, benchmarks for presentation and disclosure. Suitable criteria enable reasonably consistent evaluation or measurement of a subject matter within the context of professional judgment. For purposes of the SAs, the applicable financial reporting framework provides the criteria the auditor uses to audit the financial statements, including where relevant their fair presentation.

A3. Without an acceptable financial reporting framework, management does not have an appropriate basis for the preparation of the financial statements and the

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<sup>9</sup> SA 706.

<sup>10</sup> SA 700, "Forming an Opinion and Reporting on Financial Statements", paragraph 43.

<sup>11</sup> "Framework for Assurance Engagements," paragraph 16.

<sup>12</sup> SA 220, "Quality Control for an Audit of Financial Statements", paragraphs 9-11.

<sup>13</sup> "Framework for Assurance Engagements," paragraph 16(b)(ii).



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auditor does not have suitable criteria for auditing the financial statements. In many cases the auditor may presume that the applicable financial reporting framework is acceptable, as described in paragraphs A8-A9.

#### Determining the Acceptability of the Financial Reporting Framework

A4. Factors that are relevant to the auditor's determination of the acceptability of the financial reporting framework to be applied in the preparation of the financial statements include:

- The nature of the entity (for example, whether it is a business enterprise, or a not for profit organization);
- The purpose of the financial statements (for example, whether they are prepared to meet the common financial information needs of a wide range of users or the financial information needs of specific users);
- The nature of the financial statements (for example, whether the financial statements are a complete set of financial statements or a single financial statement); and
- Whether law or regulation prescribes the applicable financial reporting framework.

A5. Many users of financial statements are not in a position to demand financial statements tailored to meet their specific information needs. While all the information needs of specific users cannot be met, there are financial information needs that are common to a wide range of users. Financial statements prepared in accordance with a financial reporting framework designed to meet the common financial information needs of a wide range of users are referred to as general purpose financial statements.

A6. In some cases, the financial statements will be prepared in accordance with a financial reporting framework designed to meet the financial information needs of specific users. Such financial statements are referred to as special purpose financial statements. The financial information needs of the intended users will determine the applicable financial reporting framework in these circumstances. SA 800 discusses the acceptability of financial reporting frameworks designed to meet the financial information needs of specific users.<sup>14</sup>

A7. Deficiencies in the applicable financial reporting framework that indicate that the framework is not acceptable may be encountered after the audit engagement has been accepted. When use of that framework is prescribed by law or regulation, the requirements of paragraphs 19-20 apply. When use of that

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<sup>14</sup> Standard on Auditing (SA) 800, "Special Considerations-Audits of Financial Statements Prepared in Accordance with Special Purpose Framework", paragraph 8.

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framework is not prescribed by law or regulation, management may decide to adopt another framework that is acceptable. When management does so, as required by paragraph 16, new terms of the audit engagement are agreed to reflect the change in the framework as the previously agreed terms will no longer be accurate.

### General purpose frameworks

A8. At present, there is no objective and authoritative basis that has been generally recognised globally for judging the acceptability of general purpose frameworks. In the absence of such a basis, financial reporting standards established by organizations that are authorised or recognised to promulgate standards to be used by certain types of entities are presumed to be acceptable for general purpose financial statements prepared by such entities, provided the organizations follow an established and transparent process involving deliberation and consideration of the views of a wide range of stakeholders. Examples of such financial reporting standards include:

- Accounting Standards issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and/ or Accounting Standards, notified by the Central Government by publishing the same as the Companies (Accounting Standards) Rules, 2006, as may be applicable;
- Accounting Standards for Local Bodies issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI);
- International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) issued by the International Accounting Standards Board; and
- International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSASs) issued by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board.

These financial reporting standards are often identified as the applicable financial reporting framework in law or regulation governing the preparation of general purpose financial statements.

### Financial reporting frameworks prescribed by law or regulation

A9. In accordance with paragraph 6(a), the auditor is required to determine whether the financial reporting framework, to be applied in the preparation of the financial statements, is acceptable. Appendix 2 contains guidance on determining the acceptability of the financial reporting framework. In case of some entities, law or regulation may prescribe the financial reporting framework to be used in the preparation of general purpose financial statements. In the absence of indications to the contrary, such a financial reporting framework is presumed to be acceptable for general purpose financial statements prepared by such entities. In the event that the framework is not considered to be acceptable,

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paragraphs 19-20 apply.

### *Agreement of the Responsibilities of Management* (Ref: Para. 6(b))

A10. An audit in accordance with SAs is conducted on the premise that management has acknowledged and understands that it has the responsibilities set out in paragraph 6(b)<sup>15</sup>. In case of certain entities, such responsibilities may be specified in the applicable law or regulation. In others, there may be little or no legal or regulatory definition of such responsibilities. SAs do not override law or regulation in such matters. However, the concept of an independent audit requires that the auditor's role does not involve taking responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements or for the entity's related internal control, and that the auditor has a reasonable expectation of obtaining the information necessary for the audit in so far as management is able to provide or procure it. Accordingly, the premise is fundamental to the conduct of an independent audit. To avoid misunderstanding, agreement is reached with management that it acknowledges and understands that it has such responsibilities as part of agreeing and recording the terms of the audit engagement in paragraphs 9-12.

A11. The way in which the responsibilities for financial reporting are divided between management and those charged with governance will vary according to the resources and structure of the entity and any relevant law or regulation, and the respective roles of management and those charged with governance within the entity. In most cases, management is responsible for execution while those charged with governance have oversight of management. In some cases, those charged with governance will have, or will assume, responsibility for approving the financial statements or monitoring the entity's internal control related to financial reporting. In larger or public entities, a subgroup of those charged with governance, such as an audit committee, may be charged with certain oversight responsibilities.

A12. SA 580 requires the auditor to request management to provide written representations that it has fulfilled certain of its responsibilities<sup>16</sup>. It may therefore be appropriate to make management aware that receipt of such written representations will be expected, together with written representations required by other SAs and, where necessary, written representations to support other audit evidence relevant to the financial statements or one or more specific assertions in the financial statements.

A13. Where management will not acknowledge its responsibilities, or agree to provide the written representations, the auditor will be unable to obtain sufficient

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<sup>15</sup> SA 200, Paragraph A2.

<sup>16</sup> SA 580, "Written Representations," paragraphs 10-11.

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appropriate audit evidence<sup>17</sup>. In such circumstances, it would not be appropriate for the auditor to accept the audit engagement, unless law or regulation requires the auditor to do so. In cases where the auditor is required to accept the audit engagement, the auditor may need to explain to management the importance of these matters, and the implications for the auditor's report.

### Preparation of the Financial Statements (Ref: Para. 6(b)(i))

A14. Most financial reporting frameworks include requirements relating to the presentation of the financial statements; for such frameworks, preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the financial reporting framework includes presentation. In the case of a fair presentation framework the importance of the reporting objective of fair presentation is such that the premise agreed with management includes specific reference to fair presentation, or to the responsibility to ensure that the financial statements will "give a true and fair view" in accordance with the financial reporting framework.

### Internal Control (Ref: Para. 6(b)(ii))

A15. Management maintains such internal control as it determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. Internal control, no matter how effective, can provide an entity with only reasonable assurance about achieving the entity's financial reporting objectives due to the inherent limitations of internal control<sup>18</sup>.

A16. An independent audit conducted in accordance with the SAs does not act as a substitute for the maintenance of internal control necessary for the preparation of financial statements by management. Accordingly, the auditor is required to obtain the agreement of management that it acknowledges and understands its responsibility for internal control. However, the agreement required by paragraph 6(b)(ii) does not imply that the auditor will find that internal control maintained by management has achieved its purpose or will be free of deficiencies.

A17. It is for management to determine what internal control is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements. The term "internal control" encompasses a wide range of activities within components that may be described as the control environment; the entity's risk assessment process; the information system, including the related business processes relevant to financial reporting, and communication; control activities; and monitoring of controls. This

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<sup>17</sup> SA 580, paragraph A26.

<sup>18</sup> SA 315, "Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement Through Understanding the Entity and Its Environment," paragraph A46.

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division, however, does not necessarily reflect how a particular entity may design, implement and maintain its internal control, or how it may classify any particular component.<sup>19</sup> An entity's internal control (in particular, its accounting books and records, or accounting systems) will reflect the needs of management, the complexity of the business, the nature of the risks to which the entity is subject, and relevant laws or regulation.

A18. In some cases, law or regulation may refer to the responsibility of management for the adequacy of accounting books and records, or accounting systems. For example, in case of listed companies under the Companies Act, 2013 in India, the directors are required to lay down internal financial controls to be followed by the company and also ensure that they are adequate and operate effectively. The illustrative format of the engagement letter for audit of financial statements under the Companies Act, 2013 describes these responsibilities. See Appendix I.<sup>20</sup> In some other cases, general practice may assume a distinction between accounting books and records or accounting systems on the one hand, and internal control or controls on the other. As accounting books and records, or accounting systems, are an integral part of internal control as referred to in paragraph A18, no specific reference is made to them in paragraph 6(b)(ii) for the description of the responsibility of management. To avoid misunderstanding, it may be appropriate for the auditor to explain to management the scope of this responsibility.

*Considerations Relevant to Smaller Entities* (Ref: Para. 6(b))

A19. One of the purposes of agreeing the terms of the audit engagement is to avoid misunderstanding about the respective responsibilities of management and the auditor. For example, when a third party has assisted with the preparation of the financial statements, it may be useful to remind management that the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework remains its responsibility.

### **Agreement on Audit Engagement Terms**

*Agreeing the Terms of the Audit Engagement* (Ref: Para. 9)

A20. The roles of management and those charged with governance in agreeing the terms of the audit engagement for the entity depend on the governance structure of the entity and relevant law or regulation.

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<sup>19</sup> SA 315, paragraph A51 and Appendix 1.

<sup>20</sup> The underlined text has been added pursuant to the decision of the Council of ICAI taken at its 350<sup>th</sup> meeting held in February 2016.

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*Audit Engagement Letter or Other Form of Written Agreement*<sup>21</sup> (Ref: Para. 10-11)

A21. It is in the interests of both the entity and the auditor that the auditor sends an audit engagement letter before the commencement of the audit to help avoid misunderstandings with respect to the audit. In some entities, however, the objective and scope of an audit and the responsibilities of management and of the auditor may be sufficiently established by law, that is, they prescribe the matters described in paragraph 10. Although in these circumstances paragraph 11 permits the auditor to include in the engagement letter only reference to the fact that relevant law or regulation applies and that management acknowledges and understands its responsibilities as set out in paragraph 6(b), the auditor may nevertheless consider it appropriate to include the matters described in paragraph 10 in an engagement letter for the information of management.

### Form and Content of the Audit Engagement Letter

A22. The form and content of the audit engagement letter may vary for each entity. Information included in the audit engagement letter on the auditor's responsibilities may be based on SA 200<sup>22</sup>. Paragraphs 6(b) and 12 of this SA deal with the description of the responsibilities of management. In addition to including the matters required by paragraph 10, an audit engagement letter may make reference to, for example:

- Elaboration of the scope of the audit, including reference to applicable legislation, regulations, SAs, and ethical and other pronouncements of professional bodies to which the auditor adheres.
- The form of any other communication of results of the audit engagement.
- The fact that because of the inherent limitations of an audit, together with the inherent limitations of internal control, there is an unavoidable risk that some material misstatements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with SAs.
- Arrangements regarding the planning and performance of the audit, including the composition of the audit team.
- The expectation that management will provide written representations (see also paragraph A13).
- The agreement of management to make available to the auditor draft financial statements and any accompanying other information in time to

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<sup>21</sup> In the paragraphs that follow, any reference to an audit engagement letter is to be taken as a reference to an audit engagement letter or other suitable form of written agreement.

<sup>22</sup> SA 200, paragraph 3-9.

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allow the auditor to complete the audit in accordance with the proposed timetable.

- The agreement of management to inform the auditor of facts that may affect the financial statements, of which management may become aware during the period from the date of the auditor's report to the date the financial statements are issued.
- The basis on which fees are computed and any billing arrangements.
- A request for management to acknowledge receipt of the audit engagement letter and to agree to the terms of the engagement outlined therein.
- The fact that the audit process may be subjected to a peer review under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.

A23. When relevant, the following points could also be made in the audit engagement letter:

- Arrangements concerning the involvement of other auditors and experts in some aspects of the audit.
- Arrangements concerning the involvement of internal auditors and other staff of the entity.
- Arrangements to be made with the predecessor auditor, if any, in the case of an initial audit.
- Any restriction of the auditor's liability when such possibility exists.
- A reference to any further agreements between the auditor and the entity.
- Any obligations to provide audit working papers to other parties.

An example of an audit engagement letter is set out in Appendix 1.

#### Audits of Components

A24. When the auditor of a parent entity is also the auditor of a component, the factors that may influence the decision whether to send a separate audit engagement letter to the component include the following:

- Who appoints the component auditor;
- Whether a separate auditor's report is to be issued on the component;
- Legal requirements in relation to audit appointments;
- Degree of ownership by parent; and
- Degree of independence of the component management from the parent entity.

Responsibilities of Management Prescribed by Law or Regulation (Ref: Para. 11-12)

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A25. If, in the circumstances described in paragraphs A22 and A27, the auditor concludes that it is not necessary to record certain terms of the audit engagement in an audit engagement letter, the auditor is still required by paragraph 11 to seek the written agreement from management that it acknowledges and understands that it has the responsibilities set out in paragraph 6(b). However, in accordance with paragraph 12, such written agreement may use the wording of the law or regulation if such law or regulation establishes responsibilities for management that are equivalent in effect to those described in paragraph 6(b).

A26. In case of certain entities, such as, Central/State governments and related government entities (for example, agencies, boards, commissions), law or regulation governing the operations of that entities generally mandate the appointment of the auditor and commonly set out the auditor's responsibilities and powers, including the power to access an entity's records and other information. When law or regulation prescribes in sufficient detail the terms of the audit engagement, the auditor may nonetheless consider that there are benefits in issuing a fuller audit engagement letter than permitted by paragraph 11.

### **Recurring Audits** (Ref: Para. 13)

A27. The auditor may decide not to send a new audit engagement letter or other written agreement each period. However, the following factors may make it appropriate to revise the terms of the audit engagement or to remind the entity of existing terms:

- Any indication that the entity misunderstands the objective and scope of the audit.
- Any revised or special terms of the audit engagement.
- A recent change of senior management.
- A significant change in ownership.
- A significant change in nature or size of the entity's business.
- A change in legal or regulatory requirements.
- A change in the financial reporting framework adopted in the preparation of the financial statements.
- A change in other reporting requirements.

### **Acceptance of a Change in the Terms of the Audit Engagement**

*Request to Change the Terms of the Audit Engagement* (Ref: Para. 14)

A28. A request from the entity for the auditor to change the terms of the audit engagement may result from a change in circumstances affecting the need for



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the service, a misunderstanding as to the nature of an audit as originally requested or a restriction on the scope of the audit engagement, whether imposed by management or caused by other circumstances. The auditor, as required by paragraph 14, considers the justification given for the request, particularly the implications of a restriction on the scope of the audit engagement.

A29. A change in circumstances that affects the entity's requirements or a misunderstanding concerning the nature of the service originally requested may be considered a reasonable basis for requesting a change in the audit engagement.

A30. In contrast, a change may not be considered reasonable if it appears that the change relates to information that is incorrect, incomplete or otherwise unsatisfactory. An example might be where the auditor is unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding receivables and the entity asks for the audit engagement to be changed to a review engagement to avoid a qualified opinion or a disclaimer of opinion.

*Request to Change to a Review or a Related Service (Ref: Para. 15)*

A31. Before agreeing to change an audit engagement to a review or a related service, an auditor who was engaged to perform an audit in accordance with SAs may need to assess, in addition to the matters referred to in paragraphs A29-A31 above, any legal or contractual implications of the change.

A32. If the auditor concludes that there is reasonable justification to change the audit engagement to a review or a related service, the audit work performed to the date of change may be relevant to the changed engagement; however, the work required to be performed and the report to be issued would be those appropriate to the revised engagement. In order to avoid confusing the reader, the report on the related service would not include reference to:

- (a) The original audit engagement; or
- (b) Any procedures that may have been performed in the original audit engagement, except where the audit engagement is changed to an engagement to undertake agreed- upon procedures and thus reference to the procedures performed is a normal part of the report.

### **Additional Considerations in Engagement Acceptance**

*Financial Reporting Standards Supplemented by Law or Regulation (Ref: Para. 18)*

A33. In case of some entities, law or regulation may supplement the financial reporting standards established by an authorised or recognised standards setting

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organization with additional requirements relating to the preparation of financial statements. In such cases, the applicable financial reporting framework for the purposes of applying the SAs encompasses both the identified financial reporting framework and such additional requirements provided they do not conflict with the identified financial reporting framework. This may, for example, be the case when law or regulation prescribes disclosures in addition to those required by the financial reporting standards or when they narrow the range of acceptable choices that can be made within the financial reporting standards<sup>23</sup>.

### *Financial Reporting Framework Prescribed by Law or Regulation—Other Matters Affecting Acceptance (Ref: Para. 19)*

A34. Law or regulation may prescribe that the wording of the auditor's opinion use the phrases "present fairly, in all material respects" or "give a true and fair view" in a case where the auditor concludes that the applicable financial reporting framework prescribed by law or regulation would otherwise have been unacceptable. In this case, the terms of the prescribed wording of the auditor's report are significantly different from the requirements of SAs (see paragraph 21).

### *Auditor's Report Prescribed by Law or Regulation (Ref: Para. 21)*

A35. SAs require that the auditor shall not represent compliance with SAs unless the auditor has complied with all of the SAs relevant to the audit<sup>24</sup>. When law or regulation prescribes the layout or wording of the auditor's report in a form or in terms that are significantly different from the requirements of SAs and the auditor concludes that additional explanation in the auditor's report cannot mitigate possible misunderstanding, the auditor may consider including a statement in the auditor's report that the audit is not conducted in accordance with SAs. The auditor is, however, encouraged to apply SAs, including the SAs that address the auditor's report, to the extent practicable, notwithstanding that the auditor is not permitted to refer to the audit being conducted in accordance with SAs.

A36. In case of certain entities, such as, Central/State governments and related government entities (for example, agencies, boards, commissions), specific requirements may exist within the legislation governing the audit mandate; for example, the auditor may be required to report directly to a regulator or the legislative body or the stakeholders if the entity attempts to limit the scope of the audit.

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<sup>23</sup> SA 700, "Forming an Opinion and Reporting on Financial Statements", paragraph 15.

<sup>24</sup> SA 200, paragraph 20.

## **Material Modifications to ISA 210, “Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements”**

### **Addition**

Paragraph A8 of ISA 210 provides the examples of the financial reporting standards, which can be used for the preparation and presentation of general purpose financial statements. Since in India, financial reporting standards, used for the preparation and presentation of financial statements, can be ‘Accounting Standards issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India or Accounting Standards, notified under Companies (Accounting Standards) Rules, 2006’ or ‘Accounting Standards for Local Bodies issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)’, these have been added in the list of examples of financial reporting standards. References have accordingly been changed.

### **Deletions**

1. Paragraph A10 of the ISA 210 deals with situations where the entity operates in a jurisdiction that does not have a standard setting organization or a prescribed financial reporting framework. Since in India, this kind of situation does not exist, paragraph A10 has been deleted. However, the reference to Appendix 2, *Determining Acceptability of General Purpose Frameworks*, has been shifted to paragraph A9.
2. Paragraph A27 of ISA 210 deals with the condition where the law or regulation governs the operations of public sector audits, and also prescribes the public sector auditor’s responsibilities and powers. Paragraph A37 of ISA 210 deals with the specific reporting requirements within the legislation governing the audit which may mandate; for example, the auditor may be required to report directly to a minister or the legislature or to public if the entity attempts to limit the scope of the audit in case of public sector entities. Since as mentioned in the “Preface to the Standards on Quality Control, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance and Related Services”, the Standards issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, apply equally to all entities, irrespective of their form, nature and size, a specific reference to applicability of the Standard to public sector entities has been deleted. However, since it is also possible that such situations may also exist in case of certain non-public entities pursuant to a requirement under the statute or regulation under which they operate the spirit of erstwhile A27 and A37 has been retained.

## **Appendix 1**

(Ref: Paras. A22-A23)

### **Examples of an Audit Engagement Letter**

#### **Illustration 1:**

*The following is an example of an audit engagement letter for an audit of general purpose financial statements prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standards<sup>25</sup> of a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956. This letter is not authoritative but is intended only to be a guide that may be used in conjunction with the considerations outlined in this SA. It will need to be varied according to individual requirements and circumstances. It is drafted to refer to the audit of financial statements for a single reporting period and would require adaptation if intended or expected to apply to recurring audits (see paragraph 13 of this SA). It may be appropriate to seek legal advice that any proposed letter is suitable.*

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To the Board of Directors of ABC Company Limited:<sup>26</sup>

*[The objective and scope of the audit]*

You<sup>27</sup> have requested that we audit the financial statements of ABC Company Limited, which comprise the Balance Sheet as at March 31, 20X1, and the Statement of Profit & Loss, and Cash Flow Statement for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information. We are pleased to confirm our acceptance and our understanding of this audit engagement by means of this letter. Our audit will be conducted with the objective of our expressing an opinion on the financial statements.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Refer footnote 6.

<sup>26</sup> The addressees and references in the letter would be those that are appropriate in the circumstances of the engagement, including the relevant jurisdiction. It is important to refer to the appropriate persons – see paragraph A21.

<sup>27</sup> Throughout this letter, references to “you”, “we”, “us”, “management”, “those charged with governance” and “auditor” would be used or amended as appropriate in the circumstances.

<sup>28</sup> Where the financial statements of the entity include financial statements/ information of its component(s) which have been audited by another auditor/ auditors, the engagement letter may be modified as under:

*“You have requested that we audit the financial statements of ABC Company Limited, which comprise the Balance Sheet as at March 31, 20X1, and the Statement of Profit & Loss, and Cash Flow Statement for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information. We are pleased to confirm our acceptance and our understanding of this audit engagement by means of this letter. Our audit will be conducted with the objective of our expressing an opinion on the financial statements.*

Further, as informed by you, the financial statements of the components of ABC Company Limited, viz., PQR Company Limited and XYZ Company Pvt Limited, whose financial information/ financial statements have been included in the financial statements of ABC Company would be/ have been audited by another auditor/ auditors. However, we expect to be furnished the reports of such other

## *Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements*

### *[The responsibilities of the auditor]*

We will conduct our audit in accordance with Standards on Auditing (SAs), issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). Those Standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, together with the inherent limitations of internal control, there is an unavoidable risk that some material misstatements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with SAs.

In making our risk assessments, we consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. However, we will communicate to you in writing concerning any significant deficiencies in internal control relevant to the audit of the financial statements that we have identified during the audit.

*[The responsibilities of management and identification of the applicable financial reporting framework (for purposes of this example it is assumed that the auditor has determined that the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 relating to responsibility of the Board of Directors be supplemented by the descriptions in paragraph 6(b) of this SA).]*

Our audit will be conducted on the basis that [management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance]<sup>29</sup> acknowledge and understand that they have responsibility:

- (a) For the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards.<sup>30</sup> This includes:

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auditor(s) before the date of our audit report so as to enable us to deal with such reports in accordance with the principles enunciated in the Standard on Auditing (SA) 600, *Using the Work of Another Auditor*, issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Use terminology as appropriate in the circumstances.

<sup>30</sup> Or, if appropriate, "For the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards".

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- the responsibility for the preparation of financial statements on a going concern basis.
  - the responsible for selection and consistent application of appropriate accounting policies, including implementation of applicable accounting standards along with proper explanation relating to any material departures from those accounting standards.
  - The responsibility for making judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the entity at the end of the financial year and of the profit or loss of the entity for that period.
- (b) For such internal control as [management] determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- (c) To provide us with:
- (i) Access, at all times, to all information, including the books, account, vouchers and other records and documentation, of the Company, whether kept at the head office of the company or elsewhere, of which [management] is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
  - (ii) Additional information that we may request from [management] for the purpose of the audit; and
  - (iii) Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom we determine it necessary to obtain audit evidence. This includes our entitlement to require from the officers of the Company such information and explanations as we may think necessary for the performance of our duties as auditor.

As part of our audit process, we will request from [management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance], written confirmation concerning representations made to us in connection with the audit.

We also wish to invite your attention to the fact that our audit process is subject to 'peer review' under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 to be conducted by an Independent reviewer. The reviewer may inspect, examine or take abstract of our working papers during the course of the peer review.

We look forward to full cooperation from your staff during our audit.

*[Other relevant information]*

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*[Insert other information, such as fee arrangements, billings<sup>31</sup> and other specific terms, as appropriate.]*

**[Reporting]**

*[Insert appropriate reference to the expected form and content of the auditor's report.]*

The form and content of our report may need to be amended in the light of our audit findings.

Please sign and return the attached copy of this letter to indicate your acknowledgement of, and agreement with, the arrangements for our audit of the financial statements including our respective responsibilities.

XYZ & Co.  
Chartered Accountants  
Firm's Registration Number

.....  
(Signature)

(Name of the Member)

(Designation<sup>32</sup>)

Date :

Place :

Acknowledged on behalf of ABC Company by

.....

(Signature)

Name and Designation

Date

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<sup>31</sup> For example, "Our fees will be billed as the work progresses".

<sup>32</sup> Partner or proprietor, as the case may be.

**Illustration 2<sup>33</sup>**

**Example of an Audit Engagement Letter**  
**Audit of Financial Statements under the Companies Act 2013**  
**and the Rules Thereunder**  
**(When Reporting u/s 143(3)(i) is Applicable)**

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**Part A: Audit of Financial Statements**

To, the Board of Directors of ..... (name of the Entity)

(Address)

Dear Sirs,

I / We refer to the letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ informing me / us about my / our (re) appointment/ratification as the auditors of the Company. You have requested that I / we audit the financial statements of the Company as defined in Section 2(40) of the Companies Act, 2013 ('2013 Act'), for the financial year(s) beginning April 1, 20XX and ending March 31, 20YY<sup>34</sup>. The financial statements of the Company include, where applicable, consolidated financial statements of the Company and of all its subsidiaries, associate companies and joint ventures. I am / We are pleased to confirm my / our acceptance and my / our understanding of this audit engagement by means of this letter.

My / Our audit will be conducted with the objective of me / our expressing an opinion if the aforesaid financial statements give the information required by the 2013 Act in the manner so required, and give a true and fair view in conformity with the applicable accounting principles generally accepted in India, of the state of affairs of the Company as at 31st March, 20YY, and its profit/loss and its cash flows for the year ended on that date which, *inter alia*, includes reporting in conjunction whether the Company has an adequate internal financial controls system over financial reporting in place and the operating effectiveness of such controls. In forming my / our opinion on the financial statements, I / we will rely

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<sup>33</sup> This illustration has been added pursuant to decision of the Council of ICAI taken at its meeting held in November 2014. The complete text of the Announcement in this regard has been published in Paragraph 'C', "Announcements/Clarifications" of Section 1, "Announcements of the Council regarding Status of Various Documents issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India", included in Volume I.A of the Handbook.

<sup>34</sup> An Engagement Letter may need to be entered into for each year of the period covered by the Eligibility Letter issued by the auditor u/s 139 and the Appointment Letter received from the Company, to supplement / update for any subsequent changes. This may be required because the appointment would need to be ratified at each AGM u/s 139 of the 2013 Act.



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on the work of branch auditors appointed by the Company and my / our report would expressly state the fact of such reliance.<sup>35</sup>

I / We will conduct my / our audit in accordance with the Standards on Auditing (SAs), issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and deemed to be prescribed by the Central Government in accordance with Section 143(10) of the 2013 Act. Those Standards require that I / we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatements. An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and the disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal financial control relevant to the Company's preparation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

The terms of reference for my / our audit of internal financial controls over financial reporting carried out in conjunction with our audit of the Company's financial statements will be as stated in the separate engagement letter for conducting such audit and should be read in conjunction with this letter.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, including the possibility of collusion or improper management override of controls, there is an unavoidable risk that material misstatements due to fraud or error may occur and not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the SAs. Also, projections of any evaluation of the internal financial controls over financial reporting to future periods are subject to the risk that the internal financial control over financial reporting may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

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<sup>35</sup> Delete sentence on branch auditors where not applicable.

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My / Our audit will be conducted on the basis that the Management and those charged with governance (Audit Committee / Board) acknowledge and understand that they have the responsibility:

- (a) For the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the applicable Financial Reporting Standards and other generally accepted accounting principles in India. This includes:
- Compliance with the applicable provisions of the 2013 Act;
  - Proper maintenance of accounts and other matters connected therewith;
  - The responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements on a going concern basis;
  - The preparation of the annual accounts in accordance with, the applicable accounting standards and providing proper explanation relating to any material departures from those accounting standards;
  - Selection of accounting policies and applying them consistently and making judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company at the end of the financial year and of the profit and loss of the Company for that period;
  - Taking proper and sufficient care for the maintenance of adequate accounting records in accordance with the provisions of the 2013 Act for safeguarding the assets of the Company and for preventing and detecting fraud and other irregularities;
  - Laying down internal financial controls to be followed by the Company and that such internal financial controls are adequate and were operating effectively; and
  - Devising proper systems to ensure compliance with the provisions of all applicable laws and that such systems were adequate and operating effectively.
- (b) Identifying and informing me / us of financial transactions or matters that may have any adverse effect on the functioning of the Company.
- (c) Identifying and informing me / us of :
- All the pending litigations and confirming that the impact of the pending litigations on the Company's financial position has been disclosed in its financial statements;

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- All material foreseeable losses, if any, on long term contracts including derivative contracts and the accrual for such losses as required under any law or accounting standards; and
  - Any delay in transferring amounts, required to be transferred, to the Investor Education and Protection Fund by the Company.
- (d) Informing me / us of facts that may affect the financial statements, of which Management may become aware during the period from the date of my / our report to the date the financial statements are issued.
- (e) Identifying and informing me / us as to whether any director is disqualified as on March 31, 20YY from being appointed as a director in terms of Section 164 (2) of the 2013 Act. This should be supported by written representations received from the directors as on March 31, 20YY and taken on record by the Board of Directors.
- (f) To provide me / us, *inter alia*, with:
- (i) Access, at all times, to all information, including the books, accounts, vouchers and other records and documentation of the Company, whether kept at the Head Office or elsewhere, of which the Management is aware that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters. This will include books of account maintained in electronic mode;
  - (ii) Access, at all times, to the records of all the subsidiaries (including associate companies and joint ventures as per Explanation to Section 129(3) of the 2013 Act) of the Company in so far as it relates to the consolidation of its financial statements, as envisaged in the 2013 Act;
  - (iii) Access to reports, if any, relating to internal reporting on frauds (e.g., vigil mechanism reports etc.), including those submitted by cost accountant or company secretary in practice to the extent it relates to their reporting on frauds in accordance with the requirements of Section 143(12) of the 2013 Act;
  - (iv) Additional information that I / we may request from the Management for the purposes of my / our audit;
  - (v) Unrestricted access to persons within the Company from whom I / we deem it necessary to obtain audit evidence. This includes my / our entitlement to require from the officers of the Company such information

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and explanations as I / we may think necessary for the performance of my / our duties as the auditors of the Company; and

- (vi) All the required support to discharge my / our duties as the statutory auditors as stipulated under the Companies Act, 2013/ ICAI standards on auditing and applicable guidance.

As part of my / our audit process, I / we will request from the Management written confirmation concerning representations made to me / us in connection with my / our audit.

My / Our report prepared in accordance with relevant provisions of the 2013 Act would be addressed to the shareholders of the Company for adoption of the accounts at the Annual General Meeting. In respect of other services, my / our report would be addressed to the Board of Directors. The form and content of my / our report may need to be amended in the light of my / our audit findings.

In accordance with the requirements of Section 143(12) of the 2013 Act, if in the course of performance of my / our duties as auditor, I / we have reason to believe that an offence involving fraud is being or has been committed against the Company by officers or employees of the Company, I / we will be required to report to the Central Government, in accordance with the rules prescribed in this regard which, *inter alia*, requires me / us to forward my / our report to the Board or Audit Committee, as the case may be, seeking their reply or observations, to enable me / us to forward the same to the Central Government.

As stated above, given that I am / we are required as per Section 143(12) of the Act to report on frauds, such reporting will be made in good faith and, therefore, cannot be considered as breach of maintenance of client confidentiality requirements or be subject to any suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding since it is done in pursuance of the 2013 Act or of any rules or orders made thereunder.

I / We also wish to invite your attention to the fact that our audit process is subject to 'peer review' / 'quality review' under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949. The reviewer(s) may inspect, examine or take abstract of my / our working papers during the course of the peer review/quality review.

I / We may involve specialists and staff from our affiliated network firms to perform certain specific audit procedures during the course of my / our audit.

In terms of Standard on Auditing 720 – “The Auditor’s Responsibility in Relation to Other Information in Documents Containing Audited Financial Statements”

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issued by the ICAI and deemed to be prescribed by the Central Government in accordance with Section 143(10) of the 2013 Act , I / we request you to provide to me / us a Draft of the Annual Report containing the audited financial statements so as to enable me / us to read the same and communicate material inconsistencies, if any, with the audited financial statements, before issuing the auditor's report on the financial statements.

*{Other relevant information}*

*{Insert Other information, such as fee arrangements, billings<sup>36</sup> and other specific terms, as appropriate.}*

This letter should be read in conjunction with my / our letter dated \_\_\_ for the Audit of Internal Financial Controls Over Financial Reporting under the 2013 Act, in respect of which separate fees have been fixed/will be mutually agreed.

I / We look forward to full cooperation from your staff during my / our audit.

Please sign and return the attached copy of this letter to indicate your acknowledgement of, and agreement with, the arrangements for my / our audit of the financial statements including our respective responsibilities.

Yours faithfully,

(signature)  
(Name of the Member)  
(Designation)<sup>37</sup>  
(Name of the Firm)

Date:

Place:

Copy to: Chairman, Audit Committee

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<sup>36</sup> For example, "My / Our fees and out-of-pocket expenses for the audit of the financial statements for the year have been fixed by the members at the Annual General Meeting at Rs. \_\_\_\_\_, plus out-of-pocket expenses and indirect taxes/ will be mutually agreed between the Board of Directors of the Company and me / ourselves.\* I / We will bill as the work progresses. I / We will notify you promptly of any circumstances I / we encounter that could significantly affect my / our estimate of fees and discuss with you any additional fees, as necessary."

<sup>37</sup> Partner or proprietor, as the case may be.

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Acknowledged on behalf of <<Name of the entity>>

Name and Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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\* delete as applicable

**Example of an Audit Engagement Letter**

**Audit of Financial Statements When Reporting u/s 143(3)(i) is  
Applicable**

**Part B: Audit of Internal Financial Controls Over Financial Reporting**

(Refer Illustrative Format Provided in Appendix 1 of the  
Guidance Note on Audit of Internal Financial Controls Over Financial  
Reporting)

**Illustration 3<sup>38</sup>**

**Example of an Audit Engagement Letter**

**Audit of Financial Statements under the Companies Act 2013 and the Rules Thereunder**

***(When Reporting u/s 143(3)(i) of the Companies Act, 2013 is Not Applicable)***

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To,

The Board of Directors of ..... (*name of the Entity*)

(*Address*)

Dear Sirs,

I / We refer to the letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ informing me / us about my / our (re) appointment/ratification as the auditors of the Company. You have requested that I / we audit the financial statements of the Company as defined in Section 2(40) of the Companies Act, 2013 ('2013 Act'), for the financial year(s) beginning April 1, 20XX and ending March 31, 20YY<sup>39</sup>. The financial statements of the Company include, where applicable, consolidated financial statements of the Company and of all its subsidiaries, associate companies and joint ventures. I am / We are pleased to confirm my / our acceptance and my / our understanding of this audit engagement by means of this letter.

My / Our audit will be conducted with the objective of me / our expressing an opinion if the aforesaid financial statements give the information required by the 2013 Act in the manner so required, and give a true and fair view in conformity with the applicable accounting principles generally accepted in India, of the state of affairs of the Company as at 31st March, 20YY, and its profit/loss and its cash flows for the year ended on that date. In forming my / our opinion on the financial

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<sup>38</sup> This illustration has been added pursuant to decision of the Council of ICAI taken at its meeting held in November 2014. The complete text of the Announcement in this regard has been published in Paragraph 'C', "Announcements/Clarifications" of Section 1, "Announcements of the Council regarding Status of Various Documents issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India", included in Volume I.A of the Handbook.

<sup>39</sup> An Engagement Letter may need to be entered into for each year of the period covered by the Eligibility Letter issued by the auditor u/s 139 and the Appointment Letter received from the Company, to supplement / update for any subsequent changes. This may be required because the appointment of auditors would need to be ratified at each AGM u/s 139 of the 2013 Act.

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statements, I / we will rely on the work of branch auditors appointed by the Company and my / our report would expressly state the fact of such reliance.<sup>40</sup>

I / We will conduct my / our audit in accordance with the Standards on Auditing (SAs), issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and deemed to be prescribed by the Central Government in accordance with Section 143(10) of the 2013 Act. Those Standards require that I / we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatements. An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and the disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, including the possibility of collusion or improper management override of controls, there is an unavoidable risk that material misstatements due to fraud or error may occur and not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the SAs.

In making our risk assessments, we consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. However, we will communicate to you in writing concerning any significant deficiencies in internal control relevant to the audit of the financial statements that we have identified during the audit.

My / Our audit will be conducted on the basis that the Management and those charged with governance (Audit Committee / Board) acknowledge and understand that they have the responsibility:

- (a) For the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the applicable Financial Reporting Standards and other generally accepted accounting principles in India. This includes:

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<sup>40</sup> Delete sentence on branch auditors where not applicable.



### *Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements*

- Compliance with the applicable provisions of the 2013 Act;
  - Proper maintenance of accounts and other matters connected therewith;
  - The responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements on a going concern basis;
  - The preparation of the annual accounts in accordance with, the applicable accounting standards and providing proper explanation relating to any material departures from those accounting standards;
  - Selection of accounting policies and applying them consistently and making judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company at the end of the financial year and of the profit and loss of the Company for that period;
  - Taking proper and sufficient care for the maintenance of adequate accounting records in accordance with the provisions of the 2013 Act for safeguarding the assets of the Company and for preventing and detecting fraud and other irregularities;
  - Laying down internal financial controls to be followed by the Company and that such internal financial controls are adequate and were operating effectively; and
  - Devising proper systems to ensure compliance with the provisions of all applicable laws and that such systems were adequate and operating effectively.
- (b) Identifying and informing me / us of financial transactions or matters that may have any adverse effect on the functioning of the Company.
- (c) Identifying and informing me / us of :
- All the pending litigations and confirming that the impact of the pending litigations on the Company's financial position has been disclosed in its financial statements;
  - All material foreseeable losses, if any, on long term contracts including derivative contracts and the accrual for such losses as required under any law or accounting standards; and
  - Any delay in transferring amounts, required to be transferred, to the Investor Education and Protection Fund by the Company.

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- (d) Informing me / us of facts that may affect the financial statements, of which Management may become aware during the period from the date of my / our report to the date the financial statements are issued.
- (e) Identifying and informing me / us as to whether any director is disqualified as on March 31, 20YY from being appointed as a director in terms of Section 164 (2) of the 2013 Act. This should be supported by written representations received from the directors as on March 31, 20YY and taken on record by the Board of Directors.
- (f) To provide me / us, inter alia, with:
  - (i) Access, at all times, to all information, including the books, accounts, vouchers and other records and documentation of the Company, whether kept at the Head Office or elsewhere, of which the Management is aware that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters. This will include books of account maintained in electronic mode;
  - (ii) Access, at all times, to the records of all the subsidiaries (including associate companies and joint ventures as per Explanation to Section 129(3) of the 2013 Act) of the Company in so far as it relates to the consolidation of its financial statements, as envisaged in the 2013 Act;
  - (iii) Access to reports, if any, relating to internal reporting on frauds (e.g., vigil mechanism reports etc.), including those submitted by cost accountant or company secretary in practice to the extent it relates to their reporting on frauds in accordance with the requirements of Section 143(12) of the 2013 Act;
  - (iv) Additional information that I / we may request from the Management for the purposes of my / our audit;
  - (v) Unrestricted access to persons within the Company from whom I / we deem it necessary to obtain audit evidence. This includes my / our entitlement to require from the officers of the Company such information and explanations as I / we may think necessary for the performance of my / our duties as the auditors of the Company; and
  - (vi) All the required support to discharge my / our duties as the statutory auditors as stipulated under the Companies Act, 2013/ ICAI standards on auditing and applicable guidance.

### *Agreeing the Terms of Audit Engagements*

As part of my / our audit process, I / we will request from the Management written confirmation concerning representations made to me / us in connection with my / our audit.

My / Our report prepared in accordance with relevant provisions of the 2013 Act would be addressed to the shareholders of the Company for adoption of the accounts at the Annual General Meeting. In respect of other services, my / our report would be addressed to the Board of Directors. The form and content of my / our report may need to be amended in the light of my / our audit findings.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 143(12) and 143(13) of the 2013 Act, if in the course of performance of my / our duties as auditor, I / we have reason to believe that an offence involving fraud is being or has been committed against the Company by officers or employees of the Company, I / we will be required to report to the Central Government, in accordance with the rules prescribed in this regard which, *inter alia*, requires me / us to forward my / our report to the Board or Audit Committee, as the case may be, seeking their reply or observations, to enable me / us to forward the same to the Central Government. Such reporting will be made in good faith and, therefore, cannot be considered as breach of maintenance of client confidentiality requirements or be subject to any suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding since it is done in pursuance of the 2013 Act or of any rules or orders made thereunder.

I / We also wish to invite your attention to the fact that my / our audit process is subject to 'peer review' / 'quality review' under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949. The reviewer(s) may inspect, examine or take abstract of my / our working papers during the course of the peer review/quality review.

I / We may involve specialists and staff from my / our affiliated network firms to perform certain specific audit procedures during the course of my / our audit.

In terms of Standard on Auditing 720 – “The Auditor’s Responsibility in Relation to Other Information in Documents Containing Audited Financial Statements” issued by the ICAI and deemed to be prescribed by the Central Government in accordance with Section 143(10) of the 2013 Act, I / we request you to provide to me / us a Draft of the Annual Report containing the audited financial statements so as to enable me / us to read the same and communicate material inconsistencies, if any, with the audited financial statements, before issuing the auditor’s report on the financial statements.

*{Other relevant information}*

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*{Insert Other information, such as fee arrangements, billings<sup>41</sup> and other specific terms, as appropriate.}*

I / We look forward to full cooperation from your staff during my / our audit.

Please sign and return the attached copy of this letter to indicate your acknowledgement of, and agreement with, the arrangements for my / our audit of the financial statements including our respective responsibilities.

Yours faithfully,

(signature)  
(Name of the Member)  
(Designation)<sup>42</sup>  
(Name of the Firm)

Date:

Place:

Copy to: Chairman, Audit Committee

Acknowledged on behalf of <<Name of the entity>>

Name and Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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\* delete as applicable

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<sup>41</sup> For example, "My / Our fees and out-of-pocket expenses for the audit of the financial statements for the year have been fixed by the members at the Annual General Meeting at Rs. \_\_\_\_\_, plus out-of-pocket expenses and indirect taxes/ will be mutually agreed between the Board of Directors of the Company and me / ourselves.\* I / We will bill as the work progresses. I / We will notify you promptly of any circumstances I / we encounter that could significantly affect my / our estimate of fees and discuss with you any additional fees, as necessary."

<sup>42</sup> Partner or proprietor, as the case may be.

## **Appendix 2**

(Ref: Para. A9)

### **Determining the Acceptability of General Purpose Frameworks**

1. Acceptable financial reporting frameworks normally exhibit the following attributes that result in information provided in financial statements that is useful to the intended users:

- (a) Relevance, in that the information provided in the financial statements is relevant to the nature of the entity and the purpose of the financial statements. For example, in the case of a business enterprise that prepares general purpose financial statements, relevance is assessed in terms of the information necessary to meet the common financial information needs of a wide range of users in making economic decisions. These needs are ordinarily met by presenting the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the business enterprise.
- (b) Completeness, in that transactions and events, account balances and disclosures that could affect conclusions based on the financial statements are not omitted.
- (c) Reliability, in that the information provided in the financial statements:
  - (i) Where applicable, reflects the economic substance of events and transactions and not merely their legal form; and
  - (ii) Results in reasonably consistent evaluation, measurement, presentation and disclosure, when used in similar circumstances.
- (d) Neutrality, in that it contributes to information in the financial statements that is free from bias.
- (e) Understandability, in that the information in the financial statements is clear and comprehensive and not subject to significantly different interpretation.

2. The auditor may decide to compare the accounting conventions to the requirements of an existing financial reporting framework considered to be acceptable. For example, the auditor may compare the accounting conventions to IFRSs. For an audit of a small entity, the auditor may decide to compare the accounting conventions to a financial reporting framework specifically developed for such entities by an authorised or recognised standards setting organization.

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When the auditor makes such a comparison and differences are identified, the decision as to whether the accounting conventions adopted in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements constitute an acceptable financial reporting framework includes considering the reasons for the differences and whether application of the accounting conventions, or the description of the financial reporting framework in the financial statements, could result in financial statements that are misleading.

3. A conglomeration of accounting conventions devised to suit individual preferences is not an acceptable financial reporting framework for general purpose financial statements. Similarly, a compliance framework will not be an acceptable financial reporting framework, unless it is generally accepted in the industry to which the entity belongs by preparers and users.