

AU Section 9350

Audit Sampling: Auditing Interpretations of Section 350

1. Applicability

.01 Question—Section 350, *Audit Sampling*, paragraph .01, footnote 1, states that there may be reasons other than sampling for an auditor to examine less than 100 percent of the items comprising an account balance or class of transactions. For what reasons might an auditor's examination of less than 100 percent of the items comprising an account balance or class of transactions *not* be considered audit sampling?

.02 Interpretation—The auditor's examination of less than 100 percent of the items comprising an account balance or class of transactions would not be considered to be an audit sampling application under the following circumstances.

- a. *It is not the auditor's intent to extend the conclusion that he reaches by examining the items to the remainder of the items in the account balance or class.* Audit sampling is defined as the application of an audit procedure to less than 100 percent of the items within an account balance or class of transactions for the purpose of evaluating some characteristic of the balance or class. Thus, if the purpose of the auditor's application of an auditing procedure to less than 100 percent of the items in an account balance or class of transactions is something other than evaluating a trait of the entire balance or class, he is not using audit sampling.

For example, an auditor might trace several transactions through an entity's accounting system to gain an understanding of the nature of the entity's operations or clarify his understanding of the design of the entity's internal control. In such cases the auditor's intent is to gain a general understanding of the accounting system or other relevant parts of the internal control, rather than the evaluation of a characteristic of all transactions processed. As a result, the auditor is not using audit sampling.

Occasionally auditors perform procedures such as checking arithmetical calculations or tracing journal entries into ledger accounts on a test basis. When such procedures are applied to less than 100 percent of the arithmetical calculations or ledger postings that affect the financial statements, audit sampling may not be involved if the procedure is not a test to evaluate a characteristic of an account balance or class of transactions, but is intended only to provide limited knowledge that supplements the auditor's other audit evidence regarding a financial statement assertion.

- b. *Although he might not be examining all the items in an account balance or class of transactions, the auditor might be examining 100 percent of the items in a given population.* A "population" for audit sampling purposes does not necessarily need to be an entire account balance or class of transactions. For example, in some circumstances, an auditor might

examine all of the items that comprise an account balance or class of transactions that exceed a given amount or that have an unusual characteristic and either apply other auditing procedures (e.g., analytical procedures) to those items that do not exceed the given amount or possess the unusual characteristic or apply no auditing procedures to them because of their insignificance. Again, the auditor is not using audit sampling. Rather, he has broken the account balance or class of transactions into two groups. One group is tested 100 percent, the other group is either tested by analytical procedures or considered insignificant. The auditor would be using audit sampling only if he applied an auditing procedure to less than all of the items in the second group to form a conclusion about that group. For the same reason, cutoff tests often do not involve audit sampling applications. In performing cutoff tests auditors often examine all significant transactions for a period surrounding the cutoff date and, as a result, such tests do not involve the application of audit sampling.

- c. *The auditor is testing controls that are not documented.* Auditors choose from a variety of methods including inquiry, observation, and examination of documentary evidence in testing controls. For example, observation of a client's physical inventory count procedures is a test that is performed primarily through the auditor's observation of controls over such things as inventory movement, counting procedures and other procedures used by the client to control the count of the inventory. The procedures that the auditor uses to observe the client's physical inventory count generally do not require use of audit sampling. However, audit sampling may be used in certain tests of controls or substantive tests of details of inventory, for example, in tracing selected test counts into inventory records.
- d. *The auditor is not performing a substantive test of details.* Substantive tests consist of tests of details of transactions and balances, analytical review and or from a combination of both. In performing substantive tests, audit sampling is generally used only in testing details of transactions and balances.

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