

# PRP Section 3100

## *Supplemental Guidance*

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**NOTICE TO READERS**

Supplemental Guidance (SG) of the AICPA Standards for Performing and Reporting on Peer Reviews are developed in open meetings by the AICPA Peer Review Board for peer reviews of firms enrolled in the AICPA Peer Review Program. Supplemental Guidance need not be exposed for comment and are not the subject of public hearings. This guidance is applicable to firms (and individuals) enrolled in the program; individuals and firms who perform and report on peer reviews; entities approved to administer the peer reviews; associations of CPA firms, whose members are also AICPA members, authorized by the board to assist its members in forming review teams; and the AICPA program staff. The guidance is effective upon issuance unless otherwise indicated.

**(Issued Through January 1, 2009)**

**Review Requirements for Joint Ventures**

Joint ventures formed specifically to perform certain engagements are not required to have a peer review provided that:

- Each of the firms that sign the joint venture report is required to have system reviews and agree to list the joint venture(s) on their client rosters during their peer reviews, and
- The joint venture is not operating and structured as a separate firm. (Joint ventures do not include part time work arrangements, when only one firm issues the report.) If the letterhead used for the joint venture does not identify the separate firms that joined together to perform the engagement, then the joint venture is operating as a separate firm.

**Risk Assessments**

The following is an example of an appropriately documented risk assessment in the Summary Review Memorandum (SRM).

**H1.** Describe your assessment of the inherent and control risk related to the reviewed firm's accounting and auditing practice and its system of quality control. The assessment of these risks is qualitative and not quantitative. The assessment must be comprehensive and address the relevant inherent and control risk factors. Examples of factors to consider are in the Interpretations 52-1. The assessment should include how the combined risks affected detection risk and, therefore, the scope of review procedures.

*Inherent and Control Risk Factors*—Firm's practice has a few high- or moderate-risk clients, nine audits subject to Yellow Book (YB) (cities or local school districts, most subject to A-133), two other audits (a major construction company + a text book distributor), a few reviews (retail trade or medical practices), and the usual compilations for a rural-area firm.

One firm owner has significant experience in YB audits and is a respected "expert" on GASB 34. The other firm owner also has YB experience and recently served as a continuing professional education (CPE) discussion leader on 101-3 implementation in "small" firms. Each owner serves as partner-in-charge on audits and a cross-review system is in place. The five other professionals are each CPAs, and the practice has been very stable for 20+ years. Firm owners make all decisions relative to the quality control (QC) functional elements. Most of the firm's CPE is group discussion, including an annual in-house (joint venture with a regional firm) A&A update with an outside speaker. The firm's second office is a satellite office only used in tax season.

Based on review of completed QC questionnaire, the system in place is common to that found in firms with similar characteristics that have experienced successful peer reviews. The firm owners appear very conscious of QC matters. The firm uses an outside party to assist in its monitoring in year two of the three-year cycle, and internal monitoring procedures are strong and acceptably documented for each year (including the year covered by the review). The firm's review history is very favorable, and there are no known factors that suggest the level of QC has dropped.

*Conclusion:* Inherent risk = moderate, due to YB/A-133 and construction audits; control risk = low, due to QC system features; detection risk = low, due to cross-section selected.

**H2.** Based on the preceding assessment, describe how you arrived at the office(s) and engagement(s) selected for review. Include a discussion of how the scope of the peer review covered a reasonable cross-section of the reviewed firm's accounting and auditing practice, with greater emphasis on those engagements in the practice with a higher assessed level of peer review risk.

Because of the concentration, we selected two governmental audits (one A-133 and one new client, representing both owners); one construction audit (high-risk industry is not firm's strength); the retail trade review; and three compilations representing three industries (one with and two without disclosures). This covers each owner, all types of engagements, the "must select" requirement, and results in an acceptably low level of detection risk.

## System Reviews Performed at a Location Other Than the Reviewed Firm's Office

Though the majority of reviews are required to take place at the reviewed firm's office, the new *Standards* provide criteria for when a review can be performed at a location other than the reviewed firm's office. Reviewers and reviewed firms should always consider that if the review could be reasonably performed at the reviewed firm, it should be. Reducing the cost of a peer review or convenience for the reviewer is not acceptable criteria, except in extraordinary circumstances.

### Examples:

#### *Scenario 1*

The reviewed firm requests that the reviewer perform the review at the reviewer's office to reduce the travel expenses and the cost of the review. The reviewer is willing and able to travel to the reviewed firm's office. The cost for the travel is reasonable. Should the administering entity approve the review to be performed at a location other than the reviewed firm's office?

No, the ability to reduce the peer review or reasonable travel costs is not a valid reason to have the review take place at the reviewer's office.

#### *Scenario 2*

The reviewed firm has been using the same peer reviewer for all of their prior peer reviews. The peer reviewer recently relocated and is now three hours away from the reviewed firm, making it more difficult for him to perform the review at the reviewed firm's office. The reviewed firm would like to continue using this peer reviewer. Should the review be allowed to take place at a location other than the reviewed firm's office?

No, if there are other qualified reviewers available to do the review at the reviewed firm's office, the reviewed firm cannot choose to have the review performed at another location without good reason.

#### *Scenario 3*

A reviewer arranges to perform the peer review of a sole practitioner. The sole practitioner has only one audit (in an industry in which the reviewer is experienced). Due to the low number of audits, should the administering entity approve to have the review performed at a location other than the reviewed firm's office?

No, if the review could be performed at the reviewed firm's office without extreme difficulty or excessive costs, the review should be performed there.

#### *Scenario 4*

A firm in Alaska performs two audits in the construction industry. There are no reviewers with qualifications in the relevant industries in which the firm practices in the state of Alaska. Should the team captain be permitted to perform the review at a location other than the reviewed firm's office?

Yes, the Administering Entity should allow a qualified reviewer from another state to perform the review from his home state, providing the necessary documents can be sent and the results of the review would be substantially the same as if it was performed at the office of the reviewed firm.

#### *Scenario 5*

A small firm performs a small number of engagements in the banking industry. The industry and engagements are considered high risk, but the firm is concerned about having a review by a competitor in the vicinity of his firm. Aside

from these competitors and other firms that are not considered independent, no other qualified reviewers exist within a reasonable vicinity. Should the review be permitted to be performed at a location other than the reviewed firm's office?

Yes, it is a reasonable request to not have a competitor as a reviewer. If no other reviewer with the necessary expertise is available, the administering entity could allow a review to be performed at a location other than the reviewed firm's office, providing the necessary documents can be sent and the results of the review would be substantially the same as if it was performed at the office of the reviewed firm.

Another acceptable solution would be to involve the expert as a team member to only review those industry specific engagements, while the team captain performs the review of the remaining engagements and other responsibilities at the reviewed firm's office.

## Surprise Engagements

The following are several examples for selecting surprise engagements.

Question 1: Sole practitioner #1 only has one "must select" audit engagement (Employee Retirement Income Security Act [ERISA]), one very small manufacturing audit, and 15 review engagements, the team captain's risk assessment may determine that selecting the ERISA covers the audit level of service. There would be no need to select the manufacturing audit, and the peer reviewer would select one or more reviews. Sole practitioner #2 has two ERISA audits, several audits of manufacturers, and 15 review engagements.

- Answer 1:
- a. In the case of sole practitioner #1, the ERISA audit cannot be a surprise as it is a "must select," and, assuming that the risk assessment concluded that the other audit would not be selected, a review engagement would be the surprise. The team captain's conclusion should be adequately documented in the SRM (including that the appropriate "audit level" coverage results with the "must select" audit), and it is appropriate to select the surprise engagement from the next highest level of service.
  - b. In the case of sole practitioner #2, it is likely that the risk assessment would identify that only one ERISA, at least one manufacturing audit, and one or more reviews would be selected. So if two audits were going to be selected by the reviewer and there is a population large enough for it to be a surprise, then that is the level of service the surprise engagement should come from. The reviewer could select one of the two ERISA audits or one of the manufacturing audits to be the surprise. Of course whether a surprise engagement or not, an ERISA audit must be selected. Once again the team captain's conclusion should be adequately documented in the SRM.
  - c. Another situation that is more difficult to apply is when on sole practitioner #1's peer review, the peer reviewer's risk assessment determines that it would be appropriate to look at several key audit areas of the firm's manufacturing audit (maybe it wasn't a very small audit) in addition to the ERISA audit. It would be acceptable for the manufacturing audit, even though only the key audit areas are being reviewed, to satisfy the surprise engagement requirement.

The Board recognizes that it is not always possible for the reviewer to know whether a reviewed firm expects a certain engagement to be selected. In this case, the reviewed firm may or may not have expected the manufacturing audit to be selected. Reviewers are asked to use their professional judgment in these situations.

Question 2: A firm only performs one audit, one AUP engagement and/or one review engagement and/or one compilation engagement.

Answer 2: Although it is possible when assessing and documenting a risk assessment that if a firm performs one of each of these engagements that they may not all be selected for the peer review but realistically all of them being selected would not be a surprise to the firm. Therefore, for example, where the firm performs only one of each of these, a team captain would not be prohibited from notifying the firm when presenting the original list of engagements to be selected that he or she may select an engagement that wasn't on the original list. This is not required because it really does not constitute a surprise engagement, but it is permitted.

Question 3: Will there be a surprise audit engagement selected when a two partner firm performs two manufacturing audits of a similar size (one by each partner) and no other engagements?

Answer 3: A reviewed firm would realistically expect both audits to be selected, and, therefore, picking both would not be a surprise. However, similar to the answer in question 2, a team captain would not be prohibited from notifying the firm that one audit is selected when presenting the original list of selected engagements and that he or she may select the engagement that wasn't on the original list.

Question 4: Can there ever be a surprise engagement when a sole practitioner (with professional staff) only performs two audits (independent of any other level of service performed)?

Answer 4: A team captain's risk assessment would indicate to pick both audits (maybe one is an initial client and the other a high risk industry) and reasons why in some cases only one of the 2 audits would need to be selected (existing clients in same industry). It is possible that in either case a reviewed firm would realistically expect both audits to be selected, and, therefore, picking both would not be a surprise to them. Therefore, the team captain must use professional judgment in determining whether there would be a "surprise engagement" in these instances. If a risk assessment indicates that only one audit should be selected, a team captain may inform the firm he or she will select at least one audit upon arrival (without saying which one). If a risk assessment indicates that both audits should be selected, the team captain would not be prohibited from notifying the firm that one audit is selected when presenting the original list of engagements and that he or she may select the other audit upon arrival.

The team captain should thoroughly document his or her considerations in the SRM, and a Report Acceptance Body (RAB) should not be expected to challenge the team captain in the two-audit scenario unless it is somehow very apparent that there should have been a surprise audit selected.

Question 5: When the firm does not have an audit that is eligible to select as the surprise engagement, what level of service should be selected?

Answer 5: When the threshold for selecting an audit is not met (as discussed above), similar logic should be applied to selecting an engagement performed under the Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAEs) and then Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARS) as the surprise engagement.

The team captain should thoroughly document his or her considerations in the SRM, and a RAB should not be expected to challenge the team captain unless it is very apparent that there should have been a surprise engagement selected or one of a different level of service than what was selected.

## **Peer Reviewers or Firms That Consider Withdrawing From a Peer Review After the Commencement of Fieldwork**

The responsibilities of peer reviewers are detailed in the AICPA Standards for Performing and Reporting on Peer Reviews (Standards) and Interpretations, as are those of the reviewed firm, including when a firm may resign from the AICPA PRP. However, very rarely do circumstances develop whereby a reviewer determines that he or she must withdraw from the peer review. Although rare, the reasons may vary and may include poor health, not receiving the required documents from the reviewed firm within a reasonable time frame (or other lack of cooperation matters), personality conflicts with the reviewed firm that cannot be overcome, not meeting the requirements to be a peer reviewer after the fieldwork on a peer review has commenced, and other reasons.

The preceding list is not intended to be all-inclusive nor indicate when it is appropriate for a peer reviewer to withdraw from a peer review. However, such matters should be discussed with the entity administering the peer review. Some ramifications of withdrawing lead to matters that will need to be resolved solely between the peer reviewer and the firm, whereas other matters (also based on the validity and types of reasons) might also result in firm non-cooperation and/or reviewer performance issues that will need to be addressed simultaneously by the administering entity as well. The peer reviewer needs to be aware that this could affect his or her ability to perform future reviews, and the firm needs to be aware that this could affect its ability to meet licensing and other regulatory requirements, as well as AICPA membership requirements.

Also, there are very rare circumstances when a reviewed firm considers withdrawing from its peer review after fieldwork has begun. The reasons vary here as well and may include poor health, not receiving timely correspondences from the peer reviewer, and personality conflicts with the reviewer that cannot be overcome and other reasons. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive or indicate when it is appropriate for a reviewed firm to withdraw from a peer review. However, such matters should be discussed with the entity administering the peer review. Some ramifications of withdrawing lead to matters that will need to be resolved solely between the peer reviewer and the firm, whereas other matters (also based on the validity and types of reasons) might also relate to firm non-cooperation and/or reviewer performance that will need to be addressed simultaneously by the administering entity as well. The firm should be made aware of the difference between resigning from the AICPA PRP, which is specifically addressed in the Standards and Interpretations, versus possibly withdrawing from an existing review and immediately hiring a new reviewer to perform another peer review by its due date. The firm also needs to be aware that this could affect its ability to meet licensing and other regulatory requirements, as well as AICPA membership requirements.

## Consulting Between the Reviewed Firm and the Peer Reviewer

Understandably, a peer reviewer can be a valuable source of information to the reviewed firm outside of the peer review process. The Interpretations discuss other relationships/situations that would impair independence and those that wouldn't. However, professional judgment must be used in many cases when during the period between peer reviews, the reviewed firm "consults" with the firm it intends to use as its reviewer. Consulting with the reviewing firm does not impair that firm's ability to perform a subsequent peer review. However, when the frequency and extent of that consultation becomes an integral part of the reviewed firm's system of quality control (on any type of peer review), independence would then be considered impaired.

What is meant by an integral part of the firm's system of quality control? Although professional judgment must be considered, independence would be considered impaired when the frequency and extent of the consultation becomes necessary and essential for the firm's system of quality control, as a whole, to remain designed and in compliance with professional standards in all material respects. There are many factors to consider such as, but not limited to, the size of the firm in terms of number of partners, engagements, and industries.

- For example, if a sole practitioner who previously only had one omit disclosure compilation engagement (previously had a report review) has been asked to perform an ERISA audit and asks the potential peer reviewer to come in for a day and assist the firm in establishing and maintaining a system of quality control and teach the firm how to perform an ERISA audit, professional judgment would suggest that the reviewer's independence for peer review purposes has been impaired in this instance.
- Had the reviewed firm, in the example above, only called the potential peer reviewer to ask if using a specific audit guide, quality control standards and other materials currently in the reviewed firm's library (or other peer reviewed materials that can be added to the library) would be appropriate and if the reviewer had any recommendations on a course or conference that might also be helpful to take prior to performing the audit, independence would not be impaired.

## Planning and Performing Compliance Tests of Requirements of Voluntary Membership Organizations

Only those membership requirements which are specifically imbedded into the firm's written system of quality control and directly contribute to the firm's compliance with SQCS are within the scope of peer review, not because they are a membership requirement, but rather because they are an integral part of the firm's system of quality control for the firm to comply with SQCS. As an example, take a firm who is a member of the Employee Benefit Plan Audit Quality Center (EBPAQC), and thus is subject to its membership requirement for certain employee benefit plan-specific continuing professional education (CPE) be taken within a certain timeframe for certain individuals. The membership requirements further require that the CPE requirement be included in the firm's quality control documents. Assume the peer reviewer on the firm's System Review noted a deficiency in ERISA engagements, and he/she suspected based on discussions with the firm's personnel that they were not up-to-date on ERISA developments and that their not taking ERISA related CPE gave rise to the deficiency. If the peer reviewer believed, based on his/her risk assessment of the situation, that testing of the ERISA based CPE would enhance the conclusions, then they should be tested. If the testing confirmed that the appropriate ERISA related CPE was not taken as required by the firm's system of quality control, the cause of the deficiency would be noncompliance with the firm's system of quality control (and not noncompliance with the firm's EBPAQC membership requirements).

## Impact on Peer Review Results and Reporting

### Management Representation Letters

The standards discuss the documentation on an engagement that should be reviewed in a system review or an engagement review.

Professional standards require a written representation letter from management for all financial statements and periods covered by the accountant's report. The representations should be made no earlier than the date of the accountant's review report.

For purposes of peer review, if a management representation letter is dated differently than the report date, the incorrect dating alone would not cause an engagement to be not in compliance with professional standards. It may be considered a matter, depending on how materially different the dates are, and the pervasiveness should be considered when determining whether the matter should be elevated to a finding in a System Review. On an Engagement Review, if the dating is not materially different, it would not be required to be included in a finding, if it is materially different, it would be a finding. The reviewer should use his or her judgment in determining whether the dating is materially different.

If the management representation letter does not meet substantially all of the other requirements or the firm failed to obtain a management representation letter, the engagement should be deemed as not in compliance with professional standards.

### Impact on the Peer Review When Firm or Individual(s) Do Not Possess Licenses

**Firm Licenses:** For System and Engagement Reviews, when a reviewer identifies that a firm does not possess the required applicable license(s) to issue accounting and auditing engagements, for any period of time covered by the peer review year, a Finding for Further Consideration (FFC) must indicate this fact.

On all peer reviews, the administering entity's peer review committee (committee) must require an implementation plan that the firm submits a valid license(s) to the committee. If the reviewed firm obtains a valid license(s) prior to the committee requesting the implementation plan, they should immediately submit the license to the committee. In this situation, the committee will be able to consider the review without the need to request an implementation plan because the reviewed firm will have already obtained a valid license(s). The firm's license number should not be identified on the peer review documents and the information obtained should not be reported directly to the state board since it was obtained as a part of the peer review.

Firms in states with retroactive license provisions must apply the preceding rules even though the firm has the opportunity to obtain a valid license.

**Individual License(s):** For System and Engagement Reviews, engagements should be classified as not complying with professional standards if the partners or other employees with reporting responsibilities do not have a current individual license to practice public accounting as required by the state board(s) of accountancy.

The presence of an engagement not complying with professional standards identified in a System Review does not automatically result in a *pass with deficiency* or *fail* report. For System Reviews, reviewers must consider the nature, causes, pattern, pervasiveness, and relative importance to the system of quality control, including the lack of an individual license, in determining the systemic failure in the firm's system of quality control.

For Engagement Reviews, if a reviewer reviews an engagement that was issued when the individual did not possess the required license to practice, it is a deficiency, and a report with a rating of *pass with deficiency* should be issued. Consistent with the guidance for determining the nature of the peer review to issue in an Engagement Review, if deficiencies are not evident on all of the engagements submitted for review, or the exact same deficiency occurs on each of the engagements submitted for review and there are no other deficiencies, a *pass with deficiency* report should be issued. However, when the reviewer otherwise concludes that deficiencies are evident on all of the engagements submitted for review, a *fail* report is issued.

### Monitoring and Documentation of a Firm's System of Quality Control

The following guidance should be used to determine the impact on the peer review when there is marginal or a lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring, which is required by the Statement on Quality Control Standards (SQCS).

**GUIDANCE FOR MONITORING FINDINGS**

<u>FINDING</u>	<u>CONCLUSION</u>
Marginal performance (including documentation) of monitoring, and there are no FFCs, deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; marginal performance (including documentation) of monitoring is an exit conference item
Lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring, and there are no FFCs, deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; with FFC for lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring
Lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring, and there are FFCs for other issues, but no deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; with FFC for lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring
Lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring, and there are deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Deficiency in the pass with deficiency/fail report for the lack of performance (including documentation) of monitoring

*Statement on Quality Control Standards (SQCS)* requires a firm to document its system of quality control policies and procedures. The quality control questionnaires used in the peer review process may be sufficient documentation of the system of quality control for some firms, however, it should be completed and in effect prior to the beginning of the peer review year. If the peer reviewer does not deem the system of quality control to be adequately documented, that should be considered in conjunction with other findings and deficiencies noted, if any. If the firm does not have the quality control questionnaire completed prior to the peer review but has an adequate system in place that is otherwise communicated and effective, the reviewer may deem this to be an exit conference item because the firm was not in compliance with the SQCS's documentation standards. However, by completing the questionnaire it is now in compliance. If the reviewer finds other deficiencies, he or she may consider this to be a monitoring issue and that the system of quality control is neither documented nor effective, and should ordinarily be a deficiency.

The following guidance should be used to determine the impact on the peer review when there is marginal or a lack of documentation of a firm's system of quality control as required by the SQCS.

**GUIDANCE FOR DOCUMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM OF QUALITY CONTROL**

<u>FINDING</u>	<u>CONCLUSION</u>
Marginal documentation of the system of quality control, and there are no FFCs, deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; marginal documentation of the system of quality control is an exit conference item
Lack of documentation of the system of quality control, and there are no FFCs, deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; with FFC for lack of documentation of the system of quality control
Lack of documentation of the system of quality control, and there are FFCs for other issues, but no deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Pass; with FFC for lack of documentation of the system of quality control
Lack of documentation of the system of quality control, and there are deficiencies/significant deficiencies in the report	Deficiency in the pass with deficiency/fail report for the lack of documentation of the system of quality control

## Engagement Reviews—Considerations When There Are Several Departures From GAAP That Are Immaterial

In reviewing generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) basis financials with no report modification, a reviewer performing an engagement review may find several departures from GAAP, such as amortization of goodwill, marketable securities presented at cost, and a small amount of Section 179 depreciation (immediate write off) of fixed assets. It is possible that each of these items is individually or together collectively immaterial on one engagement, while at the same time obvious departures from GAAP. While discussing the “No Answers” and matters documented on the Matter for Further Consideration (MFC) form(s), it may become evident that the firm is not aware of the departures, but it claims it is immaterial anyway. Would the matter(s) rise to the level of a finding, deficiency, or significant deficiency?

If an individual finding is immaterial, if findings are collectively immaterial, or both, based on the current objectives of an engagement review (including whether the engagements submitted for review conform with the requirements of professional standards *in all material respects*), the threshold of a “deficiency” is not to be included in a peer review report with a rating of *pass with deficiency* or *fail*. However, a reviewer needs to use professional judgment in determining whether collectively the “in all material respects” threshold has not been met.

In addition paragraph 110b of the Standards section “Identifying Matters, Findings, Deficiencies and Significant Deficiencies” states that a finding should be issued in connection with an Engagement Review when the review captain concludes that “financial statements or information, the related accountant’s reports submitted for review, or the procedures performed, including related documentation, were not performed or reported on in conformity with the requirements of applicable professional standards.” The definition of a finding does not discuss materiality or relative importance.

Thus, while the objective of an Engagement Review, and the report, discuss “in all material respects,” the definition of a finding leaves room for immaterial departures to be included in a finding. Professional judgment should be used when making this determination, and whereas in this example it might not be inappropriate to elevate the matter(s) to a finding due to the number of matters noted on one engagement, a different conclusion may be reached if three engagements were reviewed and each one had a single immaterial departure that ordinarily would not be included in the finding.

### Implications of Interpretation 101-3, Performance of Nonattest Services

The AICPA Peer Review Board (Board) has determined that when a firm performs an engagement when it lacks independence, the engagement would be deemed as not being performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards (except on compilation engagements where the accountant’s report has appropriately noted the lack of independence). However, if a firm fails to meet the documentation requirements of Ethics Interpretation No. 101-3, “Performance of nonattest services,” under Rule 101, *Independence* (AICPA *Professional Standards*, vol. 2, ET sec. (general requirement no. 3), that alone does not cause an impairment of independence and therefore does not automatically result in the engagement being deemed as not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards. When a firm fails to meet any of the other requirements of 101-3 (general requirement no. 2), independence has been impaired and the engagement would be deemed as not being performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.

The Board has considered the impact of 101-3 on each type of peer review. The following guidance details three specific areas for reviewers to consider:

- What procedures should peer reviewers perform to determine if firms are performing nonattest services and if the firm is in compliance with the requirements of 101-3 where applicable?
- What documentation should peer reviewers be discussing with the firm and/or physically be reviewing?
- How should peer reviewers treat the firm’s failure to comply with Interpretation 101-3?

### System Reviews

Review teams should first evaluate the firm’s policies and procedures and compliance therewith for identifying all services performed for all clients. The peer review quality control policies and procedures questionnaires completed

by the reviewed firm request the firm to identify whether the firm performs nonattest services. (The firm's own quality control documents may contain this information as well.) In addition, the peer review engagement checklist profile information completed by the reviewed firm on all engagements selected for review asks the firm if it performs nonattest services for the client. The questionnaires and profile information also serve as representations made by the reviewed firm for the review team to follow when completing the team captain and engagement checklists.

Review teams should then determine whether the firm has complied with the requirements of 101-3, including the firm's documentation of the understanding with the client. Review teams should consider the pattern and pervasiveness of any 101-3 matters and their implications for compliance with the firm's system of quality control as a whole, in addition to their nature, causes, and relative importance in the specific circumstances in which they were observed, to determine their affects on the peer review results.

### ***Engagement Reviews***

Reviewers (and the firms they review) should be aware that 101-3, including its documentation requirements, is applicable to engagements performed under the SSAEs as well as SSARS, including compilations (although the requirement is contained in the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct).

There are very few situations where a firm undergoing an engagement review would NOT be subject to either documentation requirements required by the SSAES, SSARS, or 101-3.

1. The firm does not perform any nonattest services for its attest clients (including compilation clients). In this case 101-3 is not applicable.
2. The firm only performs compilations, and the reports have appropriately disclosed the lack of independence. In this case 101-3 is not applicable.

The 101-3 documentation requirement also does not apply to nonattest services performed *prior to* the client becoming an attest client. However, upon the acceptance of an attest engagement, the member should prepare written documentation demonstrating his or her compliance with the other general requirements during the period covered by the financial statements, including the requirement to establish an understanding with the client. (f/n 7 in Int. 101-3)

Engagement Reviews include the review of all documentation required by the Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services and the Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements, which encompass the AICPA Code of Conduct; therefore, reviewers should review the firm's documentation of the understanding with the client to determine if the firm is in compliance with 101-3. For compilation engagements performed under SSARS, the review captain may request to review all documentation if the firm has represented that the documentation is appropriate but the review captain has cause to believe that the documentation may not have been prepared in accordance with applicable professional standards.

Review teams should first evaluate the engagement checklist profile information completed by the reviewed firm on all engagements submitted for review. This document asks the firm if it performs nonattest services for the client along with specific questions regarding documentation required by 101-3. The profile information also serves as representations made by the reviewed firm for the reviewer to follow when completing the review captain's checklist and the engagement checklists. The profile information also provides common examples of nonattest services to assist the reviewed firm.

The firm's failure to comply with documentation requirements of 101-3 alone would not result in an engagement being deemed as not having been performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards, or result in the issuance of a *pass with deficiency* or *fail* report. Instead, it would be considered a finding. The review captain should consider the guidance for findings, deficiencies, and significant deficiencies in an Engagement Review to determine the further classification of the circumstances and the affect on the peer review results.

Additional guidance on AICPA Interpretation 101-3, "Performance of nonattest services," is at <http://www.aicpa.org/Professional+Resources/Professional+Ethics+Code+of+Professional+Conduct/Professional+Ethics/Resources+and+Tools>. Alternatively, please call the AICPA Ethics Hotline at 888-777-7077 (menu option 5, followed by option 2), or contact the ethics division by e-mail at [ethics@aicpa.org](mailto:ethics@aicpa.org). Additional guidance issued by the AICPA Peer Review Board in the form of a flowchart is located at: [http://www.aicpa.org/members/div/practmon/Ethics\\_Rule\\_101-3.htm](http://www.aicpa.org/members/div/practmon/Ethics_Rule_101-3.htm).

Reviewers should also be aware of other documentation that may be required by professional standards such as that found in the Other Considerations section of Ethics Interpretation 101-1, “Interpretation of Rule 101,” under Rule #101, *Independence* (AICPA *Professional Standards*, vol. 2, ET sec. 101) in which members must document the threats and safeguards applied when threats to independence are not at an acceptable level.

### **Peer Review Guidance for SAS No. 115, *Communicating Internal Control Related Matters Identified in an Audit***

SAS No. 115, (AU Section 325) *Communicating Internal Control Related Matters Identified in an Audit* defines the terms deficiency in internal control, significant deficiency, and material weakness; provides guidance on evaluating the severity of deficiencies in internal control identified in an audit of financial statements; and requires the auditor to communicate, in writing, to management and those charged with governance, significant deficiencies and material weaknesses identified in the audit. In addition, SAS No. 115 heightens the auditor’s awareness that his or her clients are ultimately responsible for their system of internal control and financial statements and, therefore, must weigh and manage the associated risks. SAS No. 115 is effective for all financial statement audits for periods ending on or after December 15, 2009, however, early implementation is permitted. For audits that have period end dates prior to December 15, 2009, the peer reviewer will need to determine whether the firm’s engagement team was applying SAS No. 112 or SAS No. 115.

In performing the peer review, reviewers should be alert for audit documentation that could indicate a significant deficiency or material weakness was present but not identified by the engagement team. Such audit documentation might include material adjusting journal entries and/or indications that the engagement team participated in the preparation of an estimate or in the drafting of the financial statements or notes.

Auditors are not required to perform procedures to identify deficiencies in internal control or to express an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity’s internal control. SAS No. 115 permits the auditor to issue a communication that no material weaknesses were identified during the audit, but, the auditor should not issue a written communication stating that no significant deficiencies were identified during the audit.

SAS No. 115 has two requirements:

- The auditor should evaluate the severity of each deficiency in internal control to determine whether the deficiency, individually or in combination, is a significant deficiency or material weaknesses.
- The auditor should communicate, in writing, significant deficiencies and material weaknesses to management and those charged with governance as part of each audit. This communication includes significant deficiencies and material weaknesses identified and communicated to management and those charged with governance in previous audits, and have not yet been remediated.

SAS No. 115 defines a deficiency in internal control, significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in the following manner:

**Deficiency in Internal Control**—A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis.

**Significant Deficiency**—A significant deficiency is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

**Material Weakness**—A material weakness is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity’s financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis.

### **Additional Guidance For SAS 115 Related to Internal Controls Over Compliance**

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a statement clarifying that these terms are to be used as defined in the generally accepted auditing standards issued by the AICPA and *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Government Accountability Office. Therefore, the following definitions should be used when an auditor reports on internal control over compliance in a single audit. This interpretation does not modify or replace an auditor’s

responsibility for communicating internal control over financial reporting matters under SAS 115 (AU section 325), *Communicating Internal Control Related Matters Identified in an Audit*, or reporting such matters as required by *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

**Deficiency in Internal Control Over Compliance**—A deficiency in internal control over compliance exists when the design or operation of a control over compliance does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect and correct noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program on a timely basis.

**Significant Deficiency in Internal Control Over Compliance**—A significant deficiency in internal control over compliance is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies in internal control over compliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program that is less severe than a material weakness in internal control over compliance, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

**Material Weakness in Internal Control Over Compliance**—A material weakness in internal control over compliance is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies in internal control over compliance, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of the Inspector General likewise defines the deficiency terms used above in the *Consolidated Audit Guide for Audits of HUD Programs (HUD Guide)*. However, the *HUD Guide* specifically changes the language “noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program” to reflect “noncompliance with applicable requirements of a HUD-assisted program.”

*Note:* The definition of a deficiency and significant deficiency above is different than the definition/criteria used in determining deficiencies and significant deficiencies in peer review.

Below is a chart to assist peer reviewers in evaluating the various situations that may be encountered during a peer review of audits where SAS No. 115 is applicable.

For simplicity, the terms as they relate to Internal Control Over Compliance will be used synonymously with the terms Deficiency, Material Weakness, and Significant Deficiency in Internal Control in the following chart, unless otherwise noted.

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>Auditor did not have specific procedures in place to identify deficiencies in internal control.</p>	<p>The auditor is not required to perform procedures to identify deficiencies in internal control.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> The auditor is required to obtain an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan the audit by performing procedures to understand the design of controls relevant to an audit of financial statements and determining whether they have been placed in operation.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b>—performing procedures to identify deficiencies in internal control is not a requirement of SAS No. 115.</p> <p>However, if the auditor has failed to obtain an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan the audit, an MFC related to that matter would be warranted.</p>
<p>Audit documentation indicates that the client likely had a control deficiency; however, the auditor failed to identify the control deficiency or failed to evaluate the severity of the control deficiency.</p>	<p>The auditor should evaluate the severity of each deficiency in internal control to determine whether the deficiency individually or in combination, is a significant deficiency or material weakness.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if the control deficiencies do not rise to the level of significant deficiency or material weakness.</p> <p><b>MFC</b> if the auditor failed to identify a control deficiency that is evident from the audit documentation. For example, the audit documentation might indicate that the auditor identified material misstatements and made proposing journal entries to the client. Those proposed journal entries are indicators of a control deficiency that should have been evaluated by the auditor.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> See following guidance in evaluating if the engagement was not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.</p>

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>Auditor identified deficiencies in internal control and determined that those deficiencies, individually or in combination, represent a significant deficiency or material weakness.</p>	<p>The requirements of SAS No. 115 are met providing the auditor communicates the identified deficiency or weakness in writing to management and those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if a written, timely communication<sup>1</sup> was made to management and those charged with governance.</p> <p><b>MFC</b> if the auditor fails to communicate the deficiency and/or weakness in writing to management and those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p> <p><b>FFC/REPORT:</b></p> <p>The peer reviewer should determine the relative importance of the matter(s) noted during the peer review to the firm’s system of quality control as a whole and their nature, causes, pattern and pervasiveness, to determine if they rise to the level of a finding, deficiency or significant deficiency as described in the standards and how they should be reported. The peer reviewer should use judgment in evaluating the significance of the failure to communicate and, generally, the peer reviewer should respect the auditor’s professional judgment. Although the evaluation of a firm’s system of quality control is the primary objective of a System Review and the basis for the peer review report, if the failure to communicate included audits conducted under GAS (the Yellow Book), or OMB Circular A-133, or included clients with operating audit committees, the engagement could be deemed to be not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards. In circumstances where an engagement is not conducted under the Yellow Book and/or there is no operating audit committee, generally the engagement would not be deemed as not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards if this was the only deficiency noted.</p>

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>Auditor identified deficiencies in internal control and did not evaluate whether they were a significant deficiency or a material weakness.</p>	<p>SAS No. 115 requires the auditor to evaluate the severity of each deficiency in internal control identified during the audit to determine whether the deficiency, individually or in combination, is a significant deficiency or a material weakness.</p>	<p><b>MFC</b> since the auditor identified the deficiencies in internal control but did not evaluate whether they were a significant deficiency or material weakness.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> See preceding guidance in evaluating if the engagement was not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.</p>
<p>Auditor identified deficiencies in internal control and upon evaluation, determined that they were not a significant deficiency or material weakness. The deficiencies in internal control were not communicated to management or those charged with governance.</p>	<p>SAS No. 115 requires the auditor to evaluate the severity of each deficiency in internal control identified during the audit to determine whether the deficiency, individually or in combination, are significant deficiencies or a material weakness. If deficiencies in internal control are evaluated and determined not to be a significant deficiency or material weakness, SAS No. 115 does not require the deficiencies in internal control to be communicated with management or those charged with governance.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> since SAS No. 115 requires the auditor to evaluate the severity of each deficiency in internal control identified during the audit to determine whether the deficiency, individually or in combination, are significant deficiencies or a material weakness. Since the deficiencies in internal control were evaluated and determined not to be a significant deficiency or a material weakness, they are not required to be communicated to management or those charged with governance.</p>
<p>Auditor identified deficiencies in internal control and upon evaluation, determined that they were not a significant deficiency or material weakness. During the peer review, the team captain determines that the identified deficiencies in internal control are likely to be a significant deficiency or a material weakness which should have been communicated in writing.</p>	<p>For example, audit documentation indicates that the auditor identified a material adjustment relative to income taxes. The proposed adjustment was provided to the firm and recorded. The firm represents that no material weakness exists; yet upon inquiry of firm personnel and review of audit documentation, the peer reviewer determines that the client does not have controls capable of preventing, or detecting and correcting possible misstatements to the income tax accrual.</p>	<p>This should be handled as a disagreement in the same manner as other disagreements between reviewer and firm. The team captain, and if possible the reviewed firm, should contact the AICPA technical hotline or AICPA Audit and Attest staff for additional guidance. The team captain may also need to consult with the technical reviewer and committee chair.</p>
<p>During an audit procedure, the auditor determined a deficiency in internal control was a significant deficiency or material weakness. The auditor orally communicated the identified deficiency as soon as it was identified to management and those charged with governance.</p>	<p>SAS No. 115 allows the auditor the ability to orally communicate identified deficiencies or weakness provided that the auditor issues a written communication no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if a written, timely communication<sup>1</sup> was made to management and those charged with governance.</p> <p><b>MFC</b> if the auditor failed to communicate the deficiency and/or weakness in writing to management and those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> See preceding guidance in evaluating if the engagement was not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.</p>

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>The auditor develops journal entries for fixed asset depreciation and recommends client’s posting to its general ledger. However, the audit documentation indicates that the client has effective controls in place over fixed assets and that such controls have been placed in operation.</p>	<p>Nothing in SAS No.115 precludes the auditor from performing this or other non-attest services.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> The peer reviewer should be aware of the independence requirements of the <i>Code of Professional Conduct (including 101-3)</i> and <i>Government Auditing Standards</i>. If the peer reviewer determines that this service constitutes a non-attest service, the peer reviewer should assess the impact of such services on independence of the auditor in light of the general activity against “Establishing or maintaining internal controls, including performing ongoing monitoring activities for a client.”</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if the audit documentation indicates that the client had effective controls in place over fixed assets and the auditor determined that those controls had been placed in operation.</p>
<p>Auditor prepares FASB 109 disclosure and provides necessary journal entries for posting by client. Client has a level of understanding such that the auditor meets AICPA ethics independence requirements, but the auditor determines the client does not have the ability to independently prepare the correct entries. Therefore the auditor has determined that a deficiency in internal control exists.</p>	<p>Since the client does not have controls in place that would prevent or detect and correct a misstatement, the auditor has appropriately detected a deficiency in internal control. The severity of the deficiency in internal control must be evaluated to determine if it was a significant deficiency or a material weakness.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if the auditor evaluates the deficiency in internal control and determines that a significant deficiency or material weakness exists and a written, timely communication<sup>1</sup> was made to management and those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p> <p><b>No MFC</b> if the auditor evaluates the deficiency in internal control and determines that a significant deficiency or material weakness does not exist and the peer reviewer agrees with that assessment.</p> <p><b>MFC</b> if the auditor (1) did not determine whether the deficiency was significant or constituted a material weakness or (2) determined the deficiency was significant or constituted a material weakness and failed to provide written communication to management and to those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date or (3) the peer reviewer believes that a significant deficiency or material weakness existed and the firm determined that one did not.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> See preceding guidance in evaluating if the engagement was not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.</p>

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>During interim fieldwork and before the client’s year-end date, the auditor identifies a deficiency in internal control and determines it is a material weakness. The auditor provides a written communication in a letter to management and those charged with governance.</p>	<p>For some matters, early communication to management or those charged with governance may be important because of their relative significance and the urgency for corrective follow-up action. SAS No. 115 does not distinguish how the written communication is to be done. It does specify that it must be provided no later than 60 days following the report release date, even if such significant deficiencies or material weaknesses were remediated during the audit.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> since the written communication<sup>1</sup> was provided no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p>
<p>The auditor does not identify any deficiencies in internal control during the audit. The auditor provides written communication to the client indicating that significant deficiencies were not identified during the audit.</p>	<p>SAS No. 115 indicates that the auditor should not issue a written communication stating that no significant deficiencies were identified during the audit because of the potential for misinterpretation of the limited degree of assurance provided by such a communication.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> A client may ask the auditor to issue a communication indicating that no material weaknesses were identified during the audit of the financial statements for the client to submit to governmental authorities.</p> <p>Also note that it would not be appropriate for an auditor to issue a communication at an interim date that no significant deficiencies and/or no material weaknesses were identified.</p>	<p><b>MFC</b> should be issued if the auditor provided written communications that no significant deficiencies were identified.</p> <p><b>FFC/REPORT:</b> The peer reviewer should determine the relative importance of the matter(s) noted during the peer review to the firm’s system of quality control as a whole and their nature, causes, pattern and pervasiveness, to determine if they rise to the level of a finding, deficiency, or significant deficiency as described in the standards and how they should be reported. The peer reviewer should use judgment in evaluating the significance of the failure to communicate, and, generally, the peer reviewer should respect the auditor’s professional judgment.</p>

<u>Situation</u>	<u>SAS 115 Guidance</u>	<u>Peer Review Guidance</u>
<p>Auditor drafts the financial statements, including footnote disclosures. However, the auditor determines the client does not have controls in place to prevent or detect and correct material misstatements in their financial statements.</p>	<p>The severity of the deficiency in internal control must be evaluated to determine if it is a significant deficiency or a material weakness.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Generally, no deficiency in internal control would exist where the client possesses or acquires, from a source other than the audit firm, a level of understanding necessary to prepare the financial statements and related footnotes and reviews the financial statements and related footnotes in sufficient detail to assume responsibility and prevent and detect misstatements.</p>	<p><b>No MFC</b> if the auditor evaluates the deficiency in internal control and determines that a significant deficiency or material weakness exists and a written, timely communication<sup>1</sup> was made to management and those charged with governance.</p> <p><b>No MFC</b> if the auditor evaluates the deficiency in internal control and determines that a significant deficiency or material weakness does not exist and thus no communication was made to management or those charged with governance.</p> <p><b>MFC</b> if the auditor failed to provide written communication to management and to those charged with governance no later than 60 days following the report release date.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> See preceding guidance in evaluating if the engagement was not performed or reported on in conformity with applicable professional standards.</p>

<sup>1</sup> The written communication should

- State that the purpose of the audit was to express an opinion on the financial statements, but not to express an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control over financial reporting.
- State that the auditor is not expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control.
- Include the definition of the terms significant deficiency and, where relevant, material weakness.
- Identify the matters that are considered to be significant deficiencies and, if applicable, those that are considered to be material weaknesses.
- State that the communication is intended solely for the information and use of management, those charged with governance, and others within the organization, and that it is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties. If an entity is required to furnish such auditor communications to a governmental authority, specific reference to such governmental authorities may be made.

## Risk Assessment SASs

### *Overview*

The primary objective of the risk assessment SASs is to enhance the auditor's application of the audit risk model in practice by requiring, among other things,

- A more in-depth understanding of the audit client and its environment, including its internal control. This knowledge will be used to identify the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements (whether caused by error or fraud) and what the client is doing to mitigate them.
- A more rigorous assessment of the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements based on that understanding.
- Improved linkage between the assessed risks and the nature, timing, and extent of audit procedures performed in response to those risks.

### *Documentation Requirement*

The SASs require auditors to document the following matters:

- The levels of materiality and tolerable misstatement, including any changes thereto, used in the audit and the basis on which those levels were determined.
- The discussion among the audit team regarding the susceptibility of the entity's financial statements to material misstatement due to error or fraud, including how and when the discussion occurred, the subject matter discussed, the audit team members who participated, and significant decisions reached concerning planned responses at the financial statement and relevant assertion levels.
- Key elements of the understanding obtained regarding each of the aspects of the entity and its environment, including each of the components of internal control, to assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, the sources of information from which the understanding was obtained, and the risk assessment procedures.
- The assessment of the risks of material misstatement both at the financial statement level and at the relevant assertion level and the basis for the assessment.
- The significant risks identified and related controls evaluated.
- The overall responses to address the assessed risks of misstatement at the financial statement level.
- The nature, timing, and extent of the further audit procedures.
- The linkage of those procedures with the assessed risks at the relevant assertion level.
- The results of the audit procedures.
- The conclusions reached with regard to the use in the current audit of audit evidence about the operating effectiveness of controls that was obtained in a prior audit.
- A summary of uncorrected misstatements, other than those that are trivial, related to known and likely misstatements.
- Conclusion about whether uncorrected misstatements, individually or in aggregate, do or do not cause the financial statements to be materially misstated, and the basis for that conclusion.

### *Peer Review Guidance*

#### *Risk Assessment*

In performing a peer review, the reviewer should evaluate whether the firm's system of quality control was sufficiently designed to identify and implement the requirements of the new SASs. This evaluation provides a basis for the review team to determine whether the reviewed firm has adopted appropriately comprehensive and suitably designed policies and procedures that are relevant to the size and nature of its practice.

As part of the risk assessment, the reviewer should discuss the new SASs with the firm to get an understanding of the firm's general knowledge of them. The reviewer should focus on the firm's policies and procedures. Are the policies and procedures designed to require the professional personnel to have an understanding of the applicable professional standards necessary to perform engagements assigned to them? If so, did the firm comply with its policies and procedures by providing firm personnel with the knowledge and expertise required to perform engagements assigned to them—specifically in regard to the new standards?

The reviewer should determine if the firm's personnel has a basic understanding and knowledge of these SASs. Based on the discussion, the reviewer should factor this understanding into the assessment of inherent and control risk. This should be documented in the SRM.

#### *Impact on Peer Review Report*

- *Firm not aware of new SASs*

If the firm was unaware of the risk assessment standards, the peer reviewer should first determine if the firm's system of quality control was not properly designed or if the firm did not comply with its policies and procedures regarding identifying and implementing new professional standards. Next, the reviewer should assess the pervasiveness of the omission of implementing such SASs on the firm's engagements and identify engagements reviewed as not being performed or reported on in conformity with the applicable professional standards if there is an omission of a critical auditing procedure(s), which includes documentation required by the SASs. Although the financial statements may not appear to have material misstatements, if the firm did not perform the audit procedures, including documentation, required by these SASs, this can result in deficiencies included in a *pass with deficiency* or *fail* report.

When a firm's system of quality control is not designed in accordance with professional standards and, as a result, engagements are not performed in accordance with professional standards in all material respects, the peer reviewer would ordinarily be able to conclude that the firm has less than reasonable assurance (or in some cases no assurance) of conforming with applicable professional standards in all material respects, which is currently the threshold for issuing a *pass with deficiency* or *fail* report respectively. Even if the firm had implemented a policy to adhere to the new SASs but completely failed to implement (comply with) the policy, the reviewer could come to the same conclusion.

The reviewer should provide a detailed description of the matter and the firm's response on the MFC. In addition, the reviewer should complete Section I of the SRM.

- *Partial compliance or lack of documentation required by the SASs*

The issue would also be compliance rather than design oriented if the firm was aware of the new SASs, including the documentation requirements, and implemented a requirement in its policies and procedures that new SASs be adhered to but the review identified that in certain situations the firm failed to comply with its policies and procedures (and professional standards) in all material respects. Depending on the extent of the required auditing procedures, including documentation, that were not complied with and the pervasiveness of the matter to the firm's system of quality control as a whole, this could result in a *pass* report with an FFC, a *pass with deficiency* report (or potentially a fail report if warranted in conjunction with other engagement deficiencies noted on the peer review).

Verbally verifying that procedures were performed, when the documentation required by professional standards is lacking in all material respects, is now considered an engagement that has not been performed in accordance with GAAS in all material respects. The peer reviewer's professional judgment must be considered when the firm has demonstrated that some but not all of the required documentation is present or when the issue is not pervasive to the firm's system of quality control as a whole (and that may be when a *pass* report is issued, plus an FFC).

The reviewer should provide a detailed description of the matter and the firm's response on the MFC. In addition, the reviewer should complete section I of the SRM.

## Repeat Findings, Deficiencies and Significant Deficiencies

The following are examples of identifying repeat findings, deficiencies and significant deficiencies.

### *System Review*

A firm's system of quality control requires that all audit procedures are reviewed by a manager or above. In the prior review the underlying cause of a finding related to analytical procedures was a lack of review and supervision by a manager or above. As a result, the auditors placed a high level of assurance on an analytic that indicated a significant unexpected difference and that difference was not investigated. Although not significant enough to warrant a deficiency in the report, the lack of review by a manager or above was the underlying cause included on a related FFC form. During the current peer review, significant differences identified in reconciliation testing were not investigated. Again, the underlying cause was determined to be the lack of review and supervision by a manager or above. Even though the working paper areas in which findings were identified are different, because the underlying cause to both is the lack of an appropriate level of review and supervision, this would be considered a repeat finding in the current review.

In the prior peer review the underlying cause of disclosure deficiencies was that although Partner A performed pre-issuance reviews on all engagements before releasing them, the reviews were not performed comprehensively enough in scope to avoid significant disclosure deficiencies. Although not required by professional standards, the partner did not use an engagement reporting and disclosure checklist, nor did the firm's system of quality control require its use, nor did the firm's system employ any other method that would ensure that the partner review would be performed comprehensively on all engagements. The use of this checklist could have contributed to a comprehensive review assuming all of the relative procedures to each engagement were performed. This was clearly a design deficiency. Though the current peer review identifies significant disclosure deficiencies, upon investigation the review team finds that the firm's system of quality control requires the use of the reporting and disclosure checklist. Partner B is responsible for performing the preissuance reviews, and the review team finds out that Partner B is not performing it on all engagements. This is a compliance deficiency and as such would not be deemed a repeat even though it led to significant disclosure deficiencies (as in the prior peer review).

In the prior review, there was a finding that the firm's system of quality control did not require appropriate supervisory review of compiled monthly financial statements. As a result, required disclosures were omitted from the financial statements. Compilations comprise a significant portion of the firm's audit and accounting practice. The firm revised its quality control policies and procedures to require a supervisory review. In the current peer review, the firm did not perform the supervisory review of compiled monthly financial statements. The lack of supervisory review resulted in inconsistent report and financial statement titling, referencing both income tax and cash basis which resulted in a deficiency in the report. The team captain determined that the revised quality control policies requirement of a supervisory review was not communicated to firm staff, audit programs were not modified to incorporate supervisory review, and the peer reviewer determined that the firm did not effectively implement the revised quality control policies and procedures for supervisory review. As such, it was determined that this is a repeat design deficiency in relation to supervisory review because the firm has not appropriately designed and implemented proper policies and procedures.

### *Engagement Review*

In the prior review, the firm received an FFC due to the misclassification of a repayment of a principal amount due on a loan as an investing activity instead of a financing activity on the statement of cash flows. During the current review the firm received an FFC due to failure to disclose a non-cash transaction of purchasing equipment directly through seller financing. The current year finding would not be considered a repeat finding. To be considered a repeat finding in an Engagement Review, the finding must be substantially the same as noted in the prior review.

In both the current and prior peer reviews, the firm did not obtain a client management representation letter for the review engagements selected. As such, this would be considered a repeat deficiency in the current peer review report.

## Reviewed Firm Name Changes

A reviewed firm may change its name during the peer review year or after the peer review year-end but prior to the peer review report being presented for acceptance to the peer review committee. A firm should complete the Notification of Change in Firm Structure Form whenever there is merger, dissolution, or just a name change and should

submit this information to the administering entity and discuss any questions it may have with the administering entity. The AICPA will make a determination whether for peer review purposes it will be treated as solely a name change. The peer reviewer is issuing a report on a period covering one year and should include the name that appeared on the letterhead of the reports issued by the firm during that year.

If subsequent to the peer review year-end the firm changed its name, the new name may appear as well. Ideally these matters should be dealt with such that the report and, if applicable, response thereto presented to the peer review committee reflect these revisions. For example, ABC firm had a peer review for the year ended 9/30/07 and changed its name to ABCDE firm effective 11/1/07. The peer review took place on 12/1/07, and the peer review report was issued 12/15/07. In this example the report could be addressed to (and all references in the report could refer to “ABCDE firm (formerly known as ABC firm”). However, at a minimum, the report should contain a reference to ABC firm because that was the name on the letterhead of the reports issued by the firm during the peer review year.

If the firm underwent a name change in the middle of the peer review year, the report should be addressed to the firm’s most current name and could also indicate in the body of the report, “also doing business as.” So in the previous example, assume ABC firm changed its name to ABCDE firm on 3/31/07. The peer review report would appropriately be addressed to ABCDE firm but the body of the report could refer to ABCDE firm “also doing business as ABC firm” during the peer review year. Reports were issued on both letterheads for the reports issued by the firm.

A firm would have a name change in the following situations:

- A partner is leaving the firm and taking no accounting or auditing (A&A) clients from this firm to a new firm.
- A partner is joining the firm and bringing no A&A clients into the firm.
- A staff member has been promoted to partner.
- A firm name is changed for commercial purposes (PLLC, LLC, PC).

If the firm’s name changed due to a merger, or acquisition, dissolution, or sale, this guidance may not be applicable.

## Regulatory Aspects of the Peer Review

### Incomplete, Initial GAO Engagements in a System Review

If a firm is performing an initial engagement under *Government Auditing Standards* (GAS also known as the Yellow Book) that occurs in a firm’s peer review year but is incomplete and without a comparable engagement, the firm can request an extension from the administering entity and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO; formerly U.S. General Accounting Office). However, if the GAO will not grant the extension, the firm will have to proceed with its peer review and receive a report (*pass*, *pass with deficiency* or *fail*, depending on the peer review results) with a scope limitation. A waiver of a scope limitation is not generally appropriate in this situation.

### Government Auditing Standards CPE Requirements and Peer Review Requirements

Some firms with engagements subject to GAS tend to spend a limited number of hours on the engagements, have limited partner involvement, and often have limited CPE in the governmental area

Reviewers should consider the degree of noncompliance with the CPE requirements and the pattern and pervasiveness of matters, as well as their implications for compliance with the firm’s system of quality control, in addition to their nature, causes, and relative importance in the specific circumstances in which they were observed. Reviewers should also ensure that the CPE deficiencies noted on the FFC forms provide enough detail so that committees can determine whether the findings are appropriate. Some reviewers may have been improperly concluding personnel lack or do not have appropriate governmental CPE when in fact they had accounting and auditing CPE, which in certain circumstances counts as governmental CPE.

If a firm conducts a governmental audit when the required personnel are not in compliance with the CPE requirements set forth in those standards,

1. consideration should be given to reporting the failure on an FFC form even if there are no other problems with the engagement.

2. consideration should be given to issuing a report with a rating of *pass with deficiency* related to personnel management if deficiencies are noted on the engagement or the noncompliance with CPE requirements rises to the level of a deficiency.
3. firms should be advised to obtain the required CPE before performing another government engagement.

Keep in mind, if a firm is performing governmental engagements and the firm does not have a quality or peer review done on the firm every three years, or the required personnel did not complete the CPE required by GAS, the engagements should be classified as not conforming with professional standards for purposes of the AICPA Peer Review Program.

### **Comparison of AICPA, GAO and DOL Rules of Independence**

Peer reviewers and technical reviewers need to be aware of the differences between the independence rules of the AICPA, GAO, and Department of Labor (DOL).

A chart has been developed comparing the AICPA rules of independence to the GAO rules of independence as they relate to nonattest services. The chart is divided among various categories of nonattest services: overarching principle, bookkeeping services, payroll services, appraisal and valuation services, information technology services, and human resources services. It is located at [http://www.aicpa.org/download/ethics/2004\\_02AICPA-GAO\\_rules\\_comparison.pdf](http://www.aicpa.org/download/ethics/2004_02AICPA-GAO_rules_comparison.pdf).

In addition, a chart has been developed comparing the AICPA rules of independence to the DOL rules. It is located at <http://www.aicpa.org/Professional+Resources/Professional+Ethics+Code+of+Professional+Conduct/Professional+Ethics/Resources+and+Tools/>.

Reviewers should be aware of these differences when reviewing GAO and DOL engagements. Any GAO or DOL engagement where independence has been impaired, under any of the rules of independence, should be deemed as not in compliance with professional standards for AICPA Peer Review Program purposes.

### **Non-SEC Issuer Entities Subject to SEC and PCAOB Independence Rules**

The SEC and/or the FDIC have specified that either or both of the SEC and PCAOB independence rules are applicable to the auditors of non-SEC issuer entities subject to FDICIA (e.g. banks, saving institutions, etc), brokers, dealers, and investment advisers. Per FIL-33-2009, independent public accountants that perform audit and attest services for insured depository institutions subject to Part 363 of the FDIC Rules and Regulations (FDICIA) must comply with the independence standards and interpretations of the AICPA, the SEC, and the PCAOB. To the extent that any of the rules within these independence standards is more or less restrictive than the corresponding rule in the other independence standards, the independent public accountant must comply with the more restrictive rule.

The independence rules applicable to auditors of non-SEC issuer brokers, dealers, and investment advisers are narrower in scope. Currently, only the SEC independence rules prohibiting non-audit services are relevant.

As a result, these engagements are separately identified on the Summary Review Memorandum (SRM), Part III A and B (Accounting and Auditing Statistics) as either “Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act (FDICIA)” or “Entities Subject to Security Exchange Commission (SEC) Independence Rules.” “Entities Subject to Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Independence Rules” are further broken down into “Carrying Broker-Dealers,” “Non-carrying Broker-Dealers,” and “Other.” It is important to separate these statistics in the appropriate categories, versus including them in the “Other SAS Engagements” category, to ensure that the team captain considers whether the engagement selections for the peer review contain a reasonable cross-section of the reviewed firm’s accounting and auditing practice, with greater emphasis on those engagements in the practice with a higher assessed level of peer review risk. It is also important to ensure that the appropriate procedures are performed during the review of the engagement.

Please note that auditors of non-issuers that report under the auditing standards of the PCAOB are not subject to PCAOB independence rules. However, if a non-issuer chooses to have its report issued under the standards of the PCAOB (without the explicit reference to “auditing standards”), then the auditor is expected to comply with all of the PCAOB’s standards, including independence rules. See the PCAOB Q&A on this topic at: [http://www.pcaobus.org/Standards/Staff\\_Questions\\_and\\_Answers/2004/06-30.pdf](http://www.pcaobus.org/Standards/Staff_Questions_and_Answers/2004/06-30.pdf).

For additional information on the independence requirements applicable to FDICIA entities, please visit <http://www.fdic.gov/news/news/financial/2009/fil09033.html>. For additional information on the independence rules applicable to brokers, dealers, and investment advisers, please visit <http://www.sec.gov/info/accountants/ocafaquaidind080607.htm>. The SEC independence rules are available at <http://www.sec.gov/rules/final/33-8183.htm>; the PCAOB independence rules are available at [http://www.pcaobus.org/Rules/Rules\\_of\\_the\\_Board/tax\\_t.aspx](http://www.pcaobus.org/Rules/Rules_of_the_Board/tax_t.aspx).

## Considering the Firm's Monitoring Procedures

Interpretation 45-2, "Considering the Firm's Monitoring Procedures" (AICPA, *Professional Standards*, vol. 2, ET sec. 16) provides that a review team may reduce the scope of the peer review if they have concluded on the effectiveness of the reviewed firm's current year internal inspection procedures. To what extent may the scope be reduced, and what factors must be considered and steps performed in order to conclude on the effectiveness? In addition, may a review team apply this same guidance to the involvement of and results from regulatory oversight?

These questions have become more relevant due to changes in the environment in which certain peer reviews are being performed, including increased rigor and robustness of those firm's monitoring processes and internal inspection programs in response to regulatory inspections and reviews. For some firms, a more continuous stream of information regarding the firm's system of quality control is now available from different parties—peer reviewers, internal inspectors, and regulators. For some firms, results from these sources could be similar, and, as a result, there could be an overlap in procedures and duplications of effort, particularly when the firm's system of quality control does not distinguish between SEC and non-SEC engagements in any significant way.

If a firm and its peer reviewer work more collaboratively and with an integrated approach, regardless of the size of the firm, the peer reviewer could maximize his or her consideration of a firm's current year internal inspection and other relevant factors (for example, regulatory oversight from the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) or other communications from the DOL and GAO, among others) in determining inherent and control risk. This could permit a reduction or modification in the scope and procedures that a peer reviewer would have to directly perform themselves. At the same time, this guidance establishes parameters to ensure that peer reviewers only reduce the scope of their direct work when specifically warranted.

Any changes to the peer review process that result from implementing this guidance may be viewed as a reallocation of efforts and resources. The peer review's scope will continue to include a well planned cross-section of the firm's accounting and auditing engagements, appropriately weighted towards risks. The overall scope and the efforts involved are not diminished, just made more efficient and effective. The resulting peer review will remain as rigorous as a peer review where there is no consideration of the firm's internal inspection process.

### Cost-Benefit Considerations

Because there are cost-benefit considerations for firms to consider, peer reviewers should discuss this guidance with firms to determine its applicability and practicality. For firms that already have a robust internal inspection program in the year of the peer review, peer review procedures could likely be reduced. For firms that do not already have a robust internal inspection program in the year of the peer review, it provides the opportunity for the firm to reallocate some of the effort from peer reviewers to its internal inspectors. However, for other firms, because of their size or other factors, performing an internal inspection in the year of the peer review, or making the internal inspection procedures more robust to facilitate some reduction in peer review scope, might not be cost-beneficial.

An added benefit of the integrated approach contemplated within this guidance is the education, training, and insight internal inspectors can gain into their own firm's design and compliance with its system of quality control from working more closely with the peer reviewer. At the same time, the peer reviewer gains more insight from working more closely with those who understand the firm best.

Just as firms' internal inspections differ, not all firms are subject to the same level of regulatory oversight or involvement from other governmental bodies. Some may be subject to PCAOB inspections and/or possibly DOL or GAO studies or other communications from them, etc. In all cases, consideration of any or all of these influences (as well as others that may be applicable) should be evaluated by the peer reviewer and the firm to determine if they impact the risk-based analysis upon which the scope of the peer review is based, while also considering corresponding costs and benefits.

The firm's cooperation is crucial; it must be willing and able to share information, whether from its internal inspectors, regulators, or other governmental bodies, with the peer reviewer.

### Factors to Consider

A number of factors should be considered in assessing the impact of proposed changes on the scope of the work that the peer reviewer performs directly. The more positive factors a peer reviewer notes and positive steps the peer reviewer performs, the more the peer reviewer can place reliance on the firm's internal inspection and reduce the scope of his or her direct efforts.

Factors to consider regarding procedures and results of an internal inspection performed in the year of the peer review include:

- **Robustness of the firm's internal inspection.** The internal inspection should not only be comprehensive, objective, detailed, and well-conducted, but reflect a continued proactive willingness by the firm's management and the internal inspectors to use a lower threshold than is required under the applicable quality control and other professional standards to uncover deficiencies and weaknesses prior to identification by other parties. Other factors that result in a more robust internal inspection include expanding the use of topical specialists and increasing the number of engagements reviewed and/or partners covered, and the various sources of oversight over the internal inspection process, including the AICPA, as part of its oversight of peer reviews. Furthermore, it is expected that the firm maintain this focus on robustness despite other environmental changes.
- **Scope.** An internal inspection's scope includes all clients. Assuming that the firm's system of quality control does not distinguish SEC from non-SEC engagements in any significant way, the peer reviewer will consider the internal inspection results for the firm's entire practice, even though SEC engagements have been carved out of the scope of an AICPA peer review administered by the National Peer Review Committee, to determine if anything arising in connection with the inspection of SEC engagements could apply to non-SEC engagements or the overall system of quality control.
- **Potential biases of internal inspectors.** An internal inspector is reviewing work performed by his coworkers and staff, and sometimes himself. Generally, he has been exposed to the same training, experience, and perspective to which others in his firm have been exposed. There is also the risk that the inspector is protective of the firm's reputation. At the same time, internal inspectors are much more familiar with their firm's policies and protocols and may be in a better position to identify departures from those policies and protocols than a peer reviewer. These influences and their potential impact on the internal inspection work product should be considered.
- **Extent of the peer reviewer's involvement in the internal inspection.** Factors to consider include the following:
  - Timely involvement in internal inspection planning, such as inclusion in discussions/meetings, and the peer reviewer's approval of internal inspectors' qualifications, the internal inspection's risk assessment, scopes, risk-based approach, and office/engagement selections.
  - Coordination of peer review planning with internal inspection planning.
  - An in-depth understanding of the firm's internal inspection process, including an assessment of its design and effectiveness.
  - Contemporaneous testing of the firm's internal inspection procedures (commonly called "piggyback reviews"). A range of between 5 and 10 percent of engagement reviews and/or items within a functional area performed by the firm should be tested by the peer reviewer. However, the peer reviewer should also consider that the extent of piggyback testing should be commensurate with the extent of direct testing to be performed by the peer reviewer. Thus, the less piggyback testing, the more direct testing, and vice versa. Testing should be performed either to the same extent that the internal inspectors test or to the extent a peer reviewer would typically test. The testing should include a review of financial statements, work papers, and the engagement checklist being used by the internal inspector, as well as participation by the review team in discussions, meetings, or both between the internal inspector and the engagement partner or manager and related follow-up procedures. While testing of internal inspection procedures can be performed after the internal inspection procedures are completed, this type of testing will not provide the peer reviewer with the same level of understanding and insight over the internal inspection process as do contemporaneous piggyback reviews. After the piggybacks are performed, the peer reviewer should evaluate the effectiveness of the internal inspection and reassess whether originally planned peer review scopes are adequate and reasonable.

- Assessment of how the internal inspectors resolve open matters and deal with potential issues detected in their reviews.
- Consideration of the scopes and selections of the internal inspectors and the use of peer review to balance out the coverage; the review team also should make preliminary determinations of peer review scope based on interim results of internal inspection procedures and subsequently reevaluate their appropriateness when the internal inspection is complete.
- Assessment of how closely the findings of peer review and internal inspection correlate, evaluated from the perspective of the peer review's scope.

As a result of the rescoping of the peer review to apply only to the non-SEC portion of a firm's practice, the risks of a peer review have shifted more to other regulated industries, such as benefit plans under ERISA, engagements performed under GAS (the yellow book) and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act. A peer reviewer could consider the following factors regarding procedures and results of regulatory oversight and communications from other governmental bodies:

- **Scope.** While the scopes of some regulatory agencies overlap that of a peer review, some do not. In particular, while SEC issuers are inspected by the PCAOB, they are not included in the scope of a National PRC peer review. As such, a review team needs to separate those PCAOB findings that are specific to SEC issuers (and decide if the firm's attitude toward SEC-specific items is representative of their attitude toward other professional requirements) and determine the applicability of other findings to the engagements under the review team's scope.
- **Source of feedback.** There is no opportunity to test the results of regulatory oversight as a review team would for internal inspection. The review team may not be privy to any of the regulator's selection processes, approach, procedures, thought processes, objectives, or preliminary or final results. Nevertheless, results from regulatory oversights are reliable sources of information because they are coming from objective and independent third parties that possess specialized knowledge and are considered to be the foremost authorities within the scope of their statutory authorities. The informational value of the results of regulatory oversight is most likely corroborative; that is, information that might corroborate that the firm's internal inspection is functioning as designed to identify potential areas of concern. In assessing this, the review team should consider whether the focus of the oversight is to ensure compliance with the specialized requirements of a particular regulator and to what extent the firm's design and compliance with their system of quality control is tested and evaluated. Some sources of feedback to the firm from other governmental bodies (such as the DOL or GAO) are not in the capacity of oversight like the PCAOB's inspection process. Feedback from these other sources may be in different forms and are likely very engagement oriented and industry specific. At a minimum, the peer review team should consider (in conjunction with the other guidance in this document) how these communications might affect the scope of the peer review in those specific industries as well.
- **Timeliness of results.** The peer reviewer should consider the timeliness or period covered by the feedback given. Firms may be inspected by regulators at different intervals, receive feedback from governmental bodies on engagements in periods not covered by the peer review, and experience varying turnaround of results. The older the results are, the less useful they will be in reducing scope. Optimally, the regulator is focusing on the same period as the internal inspectors and peer reviewer.
- **Firm's responsiveness to results.** The more responsive the firm is to regulatory oversight findings and other communications from governmental bodies, as evidenced by the corrective actions taken, the more positive its impact on risk assessment.
- **Form and source of feedback.** The peer reviewer should consider whether the feedback is in the form of draft, final reports, documented comments, informal notes, or observations from the firm to the extent the firm was aware of the regulator's or other governmental bodies' thoughts and procedures. The peer reviewer should also consider the completeness of the feedback being reported, whether information from the firm could be biased or whether any of the feedback could have been misunderstood or misinterpreted by the firm. The peer reviewer should correlate feedback obtained from the firm to feedback made public as applicable.
- **History of regulatory results.** As the PCAOB inspection process matures and becomes more established, firms will build up a history of experience in managing the process and addressing its concerns on a more proactive basis.

- **Size of the firm and its SEC practice.** The peer reviewer must consider the relative significance of the firm's SEC practice to the firm's total practice in determining the relevance of the PCAOB's results to the peer review.
- **Systems of quality control for SEC issuers vs. non-SEC issuers.** The peer reviewer should consider whether the systems are similar or have similar characteristics. The more similar the systems, the more relevant the PCAOB feedback. This should be reevaluated on each peer review because the two systems may become more divergent as the PCAOB and SEC promulgate guidance further and separate themselves more from the private and not-for-profit sectors.
- **Firm's approach to quality.** A peer reviewer should also consider that a firm's approach to engagements performed in a certain regulated industry (for example, SEC issuers, employee benefit plans, and governmental engagements) may not be consistent with its approach for other engagements. Its system of quality control and adherence to guidance may be more conscientious and diligent in practice areas that are inherently more specialized, more risky, and subject to regulatory and public oversight or scrutiny. In fact, a firm may be particularly more conscientious and diligent with its SEC issuer practice because it is now subject to new, increased scrutiny.

#### Scope of Procedures Directly Performed by the Peer Reviewers

The Standards do not suggest minimum or maximum percentages of the reviewed firm's accounting and auditing hours that should be reviewed. Determining the appropriate coverage for a review is a matter of judgment, but, nevertheless, depending on the number of positive factors and positive procedures performed by the peer reviewer, as discussed above, a peer reviewer may be able to significantly reduce the scope of the procedures he or she directly performed in the past. A significant reduction would be permitted only when the extent of the peer reviewer's involvement with the firm's internal inspection is so timely and significant that the peer review and internal inspection can truly be viewed as an integrated activity resulting in a reallocation of effort and resources among and between the peer reviewer and the firm in such a way that the overall scope and the effort involved are not diminished but, if anything, are enhanced. The resulting peer review should remain as rigorous as a peer review where there is no consideration of internal inspections or other inputs.

If, because of the effectiveness of the reviewed firm's current year's internal inspection procedures, the review team intends to reduce the scope of the peer review, the review team should consider the reviewed firm's basis for selecting offices and engagements for internal inspection procedures when determining the offices and engagements the review team will review. The selection of offices and engagements for the peer review should complement the selection for the current year's internal inspection procedures. For example, if the reviewed firm's selection of offices and engagements for internal inspection procedures is weighted more toward obtaining a reasonable cross section of its accounting and auditing practice (for example, coverage of all partners and offices every three years), then the review team should place greater weight on selecting offices and engagements with higher combined assessed levels of inherent and control risk.

#### Consultation With AICPA Staff and Peer Review Committee Panelists

Peer reviewers are required to inform AICPA Technical Staff (Staff) during peer review planning if, after considering this guidance, they plan on significantly reducing the scope of the procedures they will be performing. Depending on the circumstances, Staff may recommend that a panel from the Board or its Task Forces review a firm's internal inspection and/or peer review planning in advance. In addition, a firm, and/or peer reviewer may request that the administering entity review the internal inspection and/or peer review planning in advance.

#### Documentation

Existing guidance requiring a peer reviewer to document the work performed and the findings and conclusions of a peer review will apply to any procedures performed to evaluate or test internal inspection or the impact of regulatory oversight, including involvement in internal inspection planning procedures and piggyback procedures. The peer reviewer should include a discussion of their procedures in or as an attachment to the Summary Review Memorandum.

#### Practical Examples in Implementing This Guidance

The following brief examples illustrate how the above guidance can be implemented. Of course, these examples cannot address all the different factors a peer reviewer could consider, and thus the peer reviewer will need to use judgment in determining whether and to what extent he or she could reduce or modify scope.

*Example #1:* A firm has 800 employees, 10 offices, and a strong centralized quality control department; operates by industry segment; and has preissuance reviews and annual internal inspections. It is registered with the PCAOB, undergoes annual PCAOB inspection, and has one system of quality control for both SEC and non-SEC engagements. Based on various factors, the peer reviewers have assessed inherent and control risk as low. Prior peer reviews have been unmodified with no letter of comment. Internal inspection appears robust, and, beginning last year, the firm lowered the bar for “no” responses on checklists used for internal inspections. The peer reviewers were integrally involved in the internal inspection, approved the planning, and attended several office exit conferences. In addition, they performed piggybacks on 5 percent of the firm’s internal inspection procedures and those procedures confirmed other internal inspection results. The PCAOB was involved in the current year’s internal inspection planning, and results of the prior year’s PCAOB inspection mirrored prior internal inspection results. Results from a DOL audit that covered the peer review year raised an issue that was also highlighted during the current year’s internal inspection. *The peer reviewers could consider maximum reliance on the internal inspection process and thus consider a reduction in scope and/or procedures.*

*Example #2:* A firm has 300 employees and five offices. The firm has undergone several mergers in the past two years. Engagements undergo preissuance review, and each office performs its own internal inspection that is then sent to the main office. The firm engaged new peer reviewers and asked them to implement the guidance contained in this document with the intent of reducing scope and procedures and thus costs. The peer reviewers participated in planning meetings and performed a number of piggybacks. However, the peer reviewers disagree with some of the judgment decisions made by the internal inspectors and believe that the results from the offices are not being consolidated adequately. They are concerned that the integration of the firms has not been successful. The firm is registered with the PCAOB and underwent an inspection in the past year. However, the report is not yet public, and the firm is unable or unwilling to communicate the results or its experiences with the peer reviewers. *The peer reviewer should not place significant reliance on internal inspection to reduce scope and/or procedures.*

*Example #3:* A firm has 60 employees and two offices. It performs preissuance reviews and annual internal inspections. The peer reviewers have assessed inherent and control risk as moderate. Prior peer reviews have been unmodified with a few letters of comments items. The firm has a very experienced and highly-regarded quality control director who is assisted by several of the firm’s more technical partners each year in performing the internal inspection. They approach the internal inspection seriously. The peer reviewers were integrally involved in the internal inspection, approved the planning, and attended several office exit conferences. In addition, they performed piggybacks on 7 percent of the firm’s internal inspection procedures, and those procedures confirmed other internal inspection results, even though they revealed several issues that might lead to letter of comments items. The firm is registered with the PCAOB and underwent an inspection in the prior year. The quality control director shared the PCAOB’s matter sheets with the peer reviewers. The PCAOB had noted that staff was not adequately documenting SAS 99 considerations on the SEC engagements. The internal inspectors paid particular attention to this matter and agreed that it was a problem for one of the offices. *The peer reviewers could consider moderate reliance on the internal inspection process and thus consider some reduction in scope and/or procedures.*

*Example #4:* A firm has 20 employees and 1 office. It has no SEC engagements and is not registered with the PCAOB. Its last peer review was unmodified with no letter of comment. The firm performs preissuance reviews and annual internal inspections. The partner that performs the internal inspection is also the preissuance reviewer or engagement partner on many of the firm’s audit engagements. Its annual internal inspection is performed in the spring, but, due to scheduling conflicts, its peer reviewer, who comes from out of state, is only available in the fall. The two peer reviewers typically review four audits and four reviews/compilations, within a two or three day timeframe. *Cost-benefit and other considerations would most likely lead the firm and the peer reviewers to conclude that there should be no reliance on the internal inspection to reduce scope and/or procedures.*

## QCM Peer Reviews

Interpretation 176-1 of the standards discusses that QCM should include a sufficient level of instructions and explanatory guidance to be considered reliable aids. Interpretation 176-1 indicates that there is more guidance in the following table, which illustrates the extent of guidance that would customarily be present for QCM to constitute reliable aids for the topics listed. This table is for illustrative purposes only, the steps listed are not intended to be all inclusive, nor are they intended to describe the minimal guidance required to constitute reliable aids.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Sufficient Explanatory Guidance</u>	<u>Insufficient Guidance</u>
Materiality	<p>Guidance which interprets the provisions of AU 312 (Audit Risk and Materiality in Conducting an Audit) including considerations at the financial statement level, user considerations, industry considerations, the concept of tolerable misstatement, and reconsideration of planned materiality level as the audit progresses.</p>	<p>Ex: An audit program step notes the following –</p> <p><u>Determine and document audit materiality.</u></p> <p>There is no further guidance provided or references to the professional standards on this topic in the materials.</p> <p>The above example is insufficient as it lacks discussion of the considerations referenced in the middle column (e.g. no step with considerations related to the selecting the appropriate basis for calculating materiality, no steps to determine planning materiality, tolerable misstatement, or the posting threshold, etc).</p>
Confirmation of Receivables	<p>Guidance which interprets the provisions of AU 330 (The Confirmation Process), including definition of the confirmation process, the GAAS presumption that confirmation of accounts receivable is required and conditions in which the presumption may be overcome, the assertions addressed by confirmations, design of the confirmation request (negative vs. positive) and the conditions under which negative confirmations may be used, maintaining control of confirmations, nature and extent of alternative procedures, evaluation of results of the confirmation process, etc.</p> <p>In addition, guidance on audit sampling in AU 350 (i.e., application of audit procedures to less than 100% of items in the account balance), as well as guidance on audit documentation (AU 339), would customarily be included. Audit program steps, identified by relevant assertions would also be customarily included.</p>	<p>Ex: An audit program step notes the following –</p> <p><u>Confirm Receivable Balances</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select receivables for confirmation</li> <li>• Mail receivables and maintain control. Mail second requests as deemed necessary</li> <li>• Agree balances on returned receivables to the G/L</li> <li>• Document results</li> </ul> <p>* If confirmations are not sent, document the reasons for this decision.</p> <p>There is no further guidance provided or references to the professional standards on this topic in the materials.</p> <p>The above example is insufficient as it lacks discussion of the considerations referenced in the middle column for each step of the process (e.g. “Select receivables for confirmation” as an audit step, but no additional discussion of planning considerations – negative vs. positive confirmations, timing, the assertions that are addressed, the sampling methodology, etc).</p>
Management Representation Letters	<p>Guidance which interprets the provisions of AU 333 related to the requirement to obtain representation from management, coverage of all periods, guidance as to tailoring requirements, and guidance as to dating the letter. Illustrative examples of representation letters would also be customarily included.</p>	<p>Ex: An audit program step notes the following –</p> <p><u>Obtain a letter of Management’s representations.</u></p> <p>There is no further guidance provided or references to the professional standards on this topic in the materials.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued)</i></p>

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Sufficient Explanatory Guidance</u>	<u>Insufficient Guidance</u>
		The above example is insufficient as it lacks discussion of the considerations referenced in the middle column (e.g. with respect to dating the representation letter, considerations related to the dating of the report, considerations if report issuance is substantially delayed, etc).
Date of Auditor’s Report	Guidance which interprets the provisions of AU 530, including the requirement that the auditor report should not be dated earlier than the date on which the auditor has obtained sufficient appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion.	<p>Ex: An audit program step notes the following –</p> <p><u>Determine the appropriate date of the Auditor’s Report.</u></p> <p>There is no further guidance provided or references to the professional standards on this topic in the materials.</p> <p>The above example is insufficient as it lacks discussion of the considerations referenced in the middle column (e.g. impact of subsequent event procedures, review of the engagement file, etc).</p>

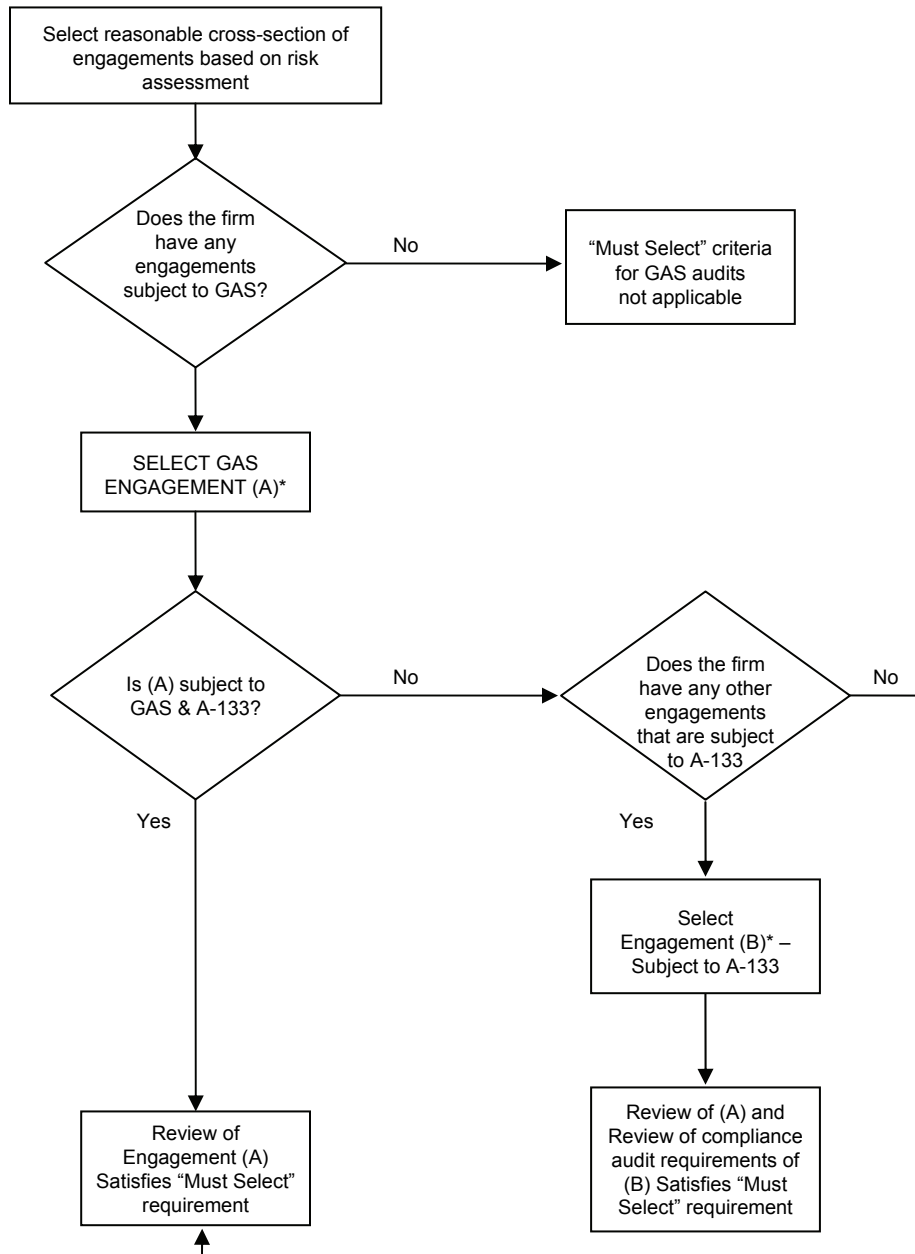
As illustrated above, QCM limited to audit program steps without explanatory guidance or specific reference to applicable professional standards would be considered insufficient, and do not constitute reliable aids. This guidance should be considered in conjunction with the guidance at Interpretation 176-1.

### **Selection of an A-133 Engagement for Review of Compliance Testing**

Peer Review Standards Interpretation 63-1a. requires that at least one engagement subject to Government Auditing Standards (GAS) be reviewed. The interpretation additionally requires that if the engagement selected is of an entity subject to GAS but not subject to the Single Audit Act/OMB Circular A-133 and the firm performs engagements of entities subject to OMB Circular A-133, at least one such engagement should also be selected for review. The review of this additional engagement must evaluate the compliance audit requirements and may exclude those audit procedures strictly related to the audit of the financial statements.

The review team is not required to select an A-133 engagement to review in its entirety. (See flowchart on next page regarding selection of engagements to review.) However, if the firm has both A-133 engagements and engagements subject only to GAS and the review team selects an engagement subject only to GAS to review, the review team must also select at least one A-133 engagement to evaluate the firm’s compliance with the requirements of A-133 (such as determination of major programs, audit procedures designed and performed in accordance with the applicable compliance supplement, reporting on the schedule of expenditures of federal awards, etc.). The number of A-133 engagements selected for review will be based upon the judgment of the review team considering its assessment of risk relative to the A-133 engagements performed by the firm. The reviewer should complete the Supplemental Checklist for Review of Single Audit Act/A-133 Engagements for the A-133 engagement (s) selected to review.

### Interpretation 63-1 – “Must Select” – subject to Government Auditing Standards (GAS)



\* Peer reviewers are reminded that the scope of the engagements selected should include a reasonable cross-section of the firm's accounting and auditing engagements, appropriately weighted considering risk. Thus, the peer reviewer will often need to select greater than the minimum of one engagement in order to attain this risk weighted cross-section.

As always, the selection of engagements should be performed using the risk-based approach, and the engagement selection should also provide a reasonable cross-section of the firm's accounting, auditing, and attestation engagements. Inclusion of a must select engagement should not impact the reviewer's consideration of engagements and industries that have a significant public interest. As an example, if for-profit HUD multi-family housing project audit engagements constitute a significant percentage of a firm's practice, one would expect the reviewer to select at least one such engagement for review. However, if the firm also performed an audit of an engagement subject to A-133 (such as a local government or not-for-profit organization), such engagement must also be selected and an evaluation of the firm's compliance with A-133 made. The review of this additional engagement must evaluate the compliance audit requirements and may exclude those audit procedures strictly related to the audit of the financial statements.

If during the course of the review of the A-133 engagement, the review team concludes there was a failure to reach an appropriate conclusion on the application of professional standards in all material respects, the review team should consider whether the application of additional review procedures is necessary. For example, if the firm fails to test a major program due to failure to properly select major programs, the review team should consider reviewing the major program selection working papers for another A-133 engagement. If, during the review of compliance testing or other procedures required under A-133, the reviewer determines the firm's performance did not conform to professional standards, the reviewer should also consider the need to review the audit of the financial statements of the selected A-133 engagement. For additional guidance on expansion of scope, see paragraph 42 of Section 4200 of the Peer Review Program Manual.

This requirement is effective for all peer reviews commencing on or after September 1, 2009 though early implementation is encouraged.

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*[The next page is 3201.]*