

AU Section 110

Responsibilities and Functions of the Independent Auditor

Source: SAS No. 1, section 110; SAS No. 78; SAS No. 82.

Issue date, unless otherwise indicated: November, 1972.

.01 The objective of the ordinary audit of financial statements by the independent auditor is the expression of an opinion on the fairness with which they present, in all material respects, financial position, results of operations, and its cash flows in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. The auditor's report is the medium through which he expresses his opinion or, if circumstances require, disclaims an opinion. In either case, he states whether his audit has been made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. These standards require him to state whether, in his opinion, the financial statements are presented in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles and to identify those circumstances in which such principles have not been consistently observed in the preparation of the financial statements of the current period in relation to those of the preceding period.

Distinction Between Responsibilities of Auditor and Management

.02 The auditor has a responsibility to plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether caused by error or fraud.¹ Because of the nature of audit evidence and the characteristics of fraud, the auditor is able to obtain reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that material misstatements are detected.² The auditor has no responsibility to plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance that misstatements, whether caused by errors or fraud, that are not material to the financial statements are detected. [Paragraph added, effective for audits of financial statements for periods ending on or after December 15, 1997, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82.]

.03 The financial statements are management's responsibility. The auditor's responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements. Management is responsible for adopting sound accounting policies and for establishing and maintaining internal control that will, among other things, initiate,

¹ See section 312, *Audit Risk and Materiality in Conducting an Audit*, and section 316, *Consideration of Fraud in a Financial Statement Audit*. The auditor's consideration of illegal acts and responsibility for detecting misstatements resulting from illegal acts is defined in section 317, *Illegal Acts by Clients*. For those illegal acts that are defined in that section as having a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts, the auditor's responsibility to detect misstatements resulting from such illegal acts is the same as that for error or fraud. [Footnote added, effective for audits of financial statements for periods ending on or after December 15, 1997, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82.]

² See section 230, *Due Professional Care in the Performance of Work*, paragraphs .10 through .13. [Footnote added, effective for audits of financial statements for periods ending on or after December 15, 1997, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82.]

authorize, record, process, and report transactions (as well as events and conditions) consistent with management's assertions embodied in the financial statements. The entity's transactions and the related assets, liabilities, and equity are within the direct knowledge and control of management. The auditor's knowledge of these matters and internal control is limited to that acquired through the audit. Thus, the fair presentation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles³ is an implicit and integral part of management's responsibility. The independent auditor may make suggestions about the form or content of the financial statements or draft them, in whole or in part, based on information from management during the performance of the audit. However, the auditor's responsibility for the financial statements he or she has audited is confined to the expression of his or her opinion on them. [Revised, April 1989, to reflect conforming changes necessary due to the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards Nos. 53 through 62. As amended, effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after January 1, 1997, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 78. Paragraph renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997. Revised, April 2002, to reflect conforming changes necessary due to the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 94. Revised, March 2006, to reflect conforming changes necessary due to the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 106.]

Professional Qualifications

.04 The professional qualifications required of the independent auditor are those of a person with the education and experience to practice as such. They do not include those of a person trained for or qualified to engage in another profession or occupation. For example, the independent auditor, in observing the taking of a physical inventory, does not purport to act as an appraiser, a valuer, or an expert in materials. Similarly, although the independent auditor is informed in a general manner about matters of commercial law, he does not purport to act in the capacity of a lawyer and may appropriately rely upon the advice of attorneys in all matters of law. [Paragraph renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997.]

.05 In the observance of generally accepted auditing standards, the independent auditor must exercise his judgment in determining which auditing procedures are necessary in the circumstances to afford a reasonable basis for his opinion. His judgment is required to be the informed judgment of a qualified professional person. [Paragraph renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997.]

Detection of Fraud

[.06–.09] [Superseded January 1977 by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 16, as superseded by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 53, as superseded by section 316. Paragraphs renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997.]

³ The responsibilities and functions of the independent auditor are also applicable to financial statements presented in conformity with a comprehensive basis of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles; references in this section to financial statements presented in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles also include those presentations. [Footnote added, effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after January 1, 1997, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 78. Footnote renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997.]

Responsibility to the Profession

.10 The independent auditor also has a responsibility to his profession, the responsibility to comply with the standards accepted by his fellow practitioners. In recognition of the importance of such compliance, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants has adopted, as part of its Code of Professional Conduct, rules which support the standards and provide a basis for their enforcement. [Paragraph renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 82, February 1997.]
