

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREPARATION OF ACCOUNTS

Best Practice Guidance

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Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Applicable Date	3
3. Assurance Gained by Users	3
4. Objective of an Accounts Preparation Engagement	3
5. General Principles of an Accounts Preparation Engagement	4
6. Defining the Terms of Engagement	5
7. Planning	5
8. Documentation	5
9. Procedures	5
10. Content of Accounts	7
11. Responsibility of Management	7
12. Management Approval of Accounts	8
13. Reporting on an Accounts Preparation Engagement	8
Appendices:	
Appendix 1: Suggested Paragraphs for Inclusion in an Engagement Letter for an Accounts Preparation Assignment for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company	10
Appendix 2: Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company	12
Appendix 3: Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company Containing an Explanatory Paragraph	13
Appendix 4: Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Sole Trader or Partnership	15

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREPARATION OF ACCOUNTS

For the purposes of this guidance the term "chartered accountants" has been used throughout to refer to chartered accountants in public practice.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this statement is to provide guidance on chartered accountants' professional responsibilities when an accounts preparation engagement is undertaken and the form and content of any report the chartered accountants issue in connection with this engagement.
2. This statement applies to the preparation of accounts for all entities, including sole traders, partnerships, limited liability partnerships as well as companies. Accordingly the term "entity" is used to denote either a company, a sole trader, partnership, limited liability partnership or other organisation for which the chartered accountants are preparing accounts. The term "management" refers to the governing board relevant to the type of entity concerned.
3. It should be noted that there is no standard on accounts preparation in the UK. This guidance, as an indication of best practice, is therefore intended to be persuasive rather than prescriptive.

Applicable Date

4. This guidance applies to the preparation of accounts for accounting periods ending on or after 30 April 2010. Earlier adoption is encouraged.

Assurance Gained by Users

5. The chartered accountants engaged to prepare the accounts would be practising under the ethical rules of a professional Institute. These require that chartered accountants should not be associated with accounts which they consider to be misleading.
6. When preparing the accounts, chartered accountants may perform certain quality control procedures to ensure that the accounts are consistent with their understanding of the business, and to attempt to detect any errors which may have been made in the accounts preparation. Whilst this is not an absolute requirement, users would be likely to obtain additional assurance from accounts which have been prepared by a firm of chartered accountants by virtue of their experience, integrity and general reputation. Accordingly, as a matter of best practice, chartered accountants are encouraged to adopt the procedures suggested below.
7. In addition, where the chartered accountants are independent of the entity's management, some further credibility may be given to the accounts because of their objective assessment of the estimates and judgements which are made by management and incorporated into the accounts.

Objective of an Accounts Preparation Engagement

8. The objective of an accounts preparation engagement is for the chartered accountants to use accounting expertise (as opposed to auditing expertise) to collect, classify and summarise financial information.

9. This ordinarily entails reducing detailed data to a manageable and understandable form without a requirement to test the assertions underlying that information. The procedures employed are not designed and do not enable the chartered accountants to express any assurance on the financial information. However, users of the compiled financial information derive some benefit as a result of the chartered accountants' involvement because the service has been performed with professional competence and due care.

General Principles of an Accounts Preparation Engagement

10. The chartered accountants should comply with the ICAS Code of Ethics.
11. Ethical principles governing the chartered accountants' professional responsibilities for this type of engagement are:
- (a) Integrity
A professional accountant should be straightforward and honest in all professional and business relationships.
 - (b) Objectivity
A professional accountant should not allow bias, conflict of interest or undue influence of others to override professional or business judgements.
 - (c) Professional Competence and Due Care
A professional accountant has a continuing duty to maintain professional knowledge and skill at the level required to ensure that a client or employer receives competent professional service based on current developments in practice, legislation and techniques. A professional accountant should act diligently and in accordance with applicable technical and professional standards when providing professional services.
 - (d) Confidentiality
A professional accountant should respect the confidentiality of information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships and should not disclose any such information to third parties without proper and specific authority unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to disclose. Confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships should not be used for the personal advantage of the professional accountant or third parties.
 - (e) Professional Behaviour
A professional accountant should comply with relevant laws and regulations and should avoid any action that discredits the profession.
12. Independence in the strict sense applicable to audit engagements is not essential to an accounts preparation engagement. However, if the chartered accountants are also required to issue an independent examiner's report for a charity under the requirements of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, they must be independent of the charity. In such circumstances, the chartered accountants must satisfy the independence requirements of sections 280 and 290 of the ICAS Code of Ethics.
13. There are certain factors which threaten objectivity in any professional role. These are:
- (a) Family, other personal or business relationship with the client entity or its directors, owners or employees;
 - (b) Loans or guarantees to or from the client entity or its directors, owners or employees (including outstanding fees);

- (c) Beneficial interests in shares and other investments of the client entity;
- (d) Acceptance of goods, services or hospitality from the client entity; and
- (e) Any other conflict of interests.

These are discussed in section 280 of the ICAS Code of Ethics.

14. It should be noted that if, in addition, the chartered accountants are requested to provide any kind of opinion, reference should be made to section 290 of the ICAS Code of Ethics which deals with assurance engagements.

Defining the Terms of Engagement

15. The chartered accountants should ensure that there is a clear understanding between the client and themselves regarding the terms of the engagement.
16. It is recommended that the assignment is covered by an engagement letter which documents the key terms of the appointment. An engagement letter confirms both the client's agreement and the chartered accountants' acceptance of the appointment and helps avoid misunderstandings regarding such matters as the objectives and scope of the engagement, the extent of the chartered accountants' responsibilities and the form of report to be issued. Suggested paragraphs to be included in an engagement letter for a non-charitable audit exempt company are contained in Appendix 1: these can be easily adapted for other types of entity.

Planning

17. The chartered accountants should plan the work so that an effective engagement will be performed.
18. The extent of planning varies according to the complexity of the entity's accounting records and accounting procedures, and according to the chartered accountants' experience with the business. A further factor is the extent to which work will be delegated to assistants.

Documentation

19. The chartered accountants should document matters which are important in providing evidence that the engagement was carried out in accordance with professional expectations and the terms of the engagement.

Procedures

20. The chartered accountants should obtain a general knowledge of the business and operations of the entity and should be familiar with the accounting principles and practices of the industry in which the entity operates and with the form and content of the accounts that is appropriate in the circumstances.
21. To prepare accounts, the chartered accountants require a general understanding of the nature of the entity's business transactions, the form of its accounting records and the accounting basis on which the accounts are to be presented. The chartered accountants ordinarily obtain knowledge of these matters through experience with the entity or inquiry of the entity's personnel.
22. The chartered accountants should assess any estimates and judgements made by management as they are incorporated into the accounts being prepared. Any unreasonable estimates or unusual judgements would normally be questioned.

23. If the chartered accountants become aware that information supplied by management may be incorrect or incomplete, they should request management to provide additional information and verify any explanations. If management refuses to provide additional information, the chartered accountants should withdraw from the engagement, informing the client of the reasons for the withdrawal.
24. The chartered accountants would normally vouch major transactions, such as fixed asset additions, or unusual items, in order to satisfy themselves as to the proper recording and classification of the major entries in the accounts.
25. The chartered accountants would normally perform some basic cut off procedures to ensure that items were being recorded in the correct period.
26. The chartered accountants should review the completed accounts and consider whether they appear to be appropriate in form and free from obvious material misstatements. In this sense, misstatements may include:
 - misclassifications of items in the accounts;
 - mistakes in the application of the relevant statutory or regulatory reporting requirements;
 - non-disclosure of any known departures from the statutory or regulatory requirements;
 - non-disclosure of any other significant matters of which the chartered accountants have become aware.
27. This would normally comprise an overall analytical review of the accounts together with a follow up of any unexpected variances arising, by discussion with management. This would be designed to ensure that the accounts are consistent with the chartered accountants' understanding of the business, and thus ensure that no errors had been made in the accounts preparation.
28. The chartered accountants would normally ensure that all statutory and financial reporting standard disclosure requirements have been met. This might be achieved through reliance on an up to date accounts preparation computer package or by completion of an accounts disclosure checklist, tailored as appropriate for the particular type of entity concerned.
29. The verification work suggested in paragraphs 20 to 28 falls well short of an audit and does not include any detailed procedures to verify the validity or completeness of the books and records generally. Indirectly, however, these procedures would give the chartered accountant some comfort that the accounts properly reflect the business of the entity and are free from material error.
30. If the chartered accountants become aware of material misstatements, they should try to agree with management appropriate amendments to the accounts. Such amendments to the accounts may include adjustments to the figures, reclassification of items in the accounts and/or additional disclosure. If such amendments are not made and the financial information is considered to be misleading, the chartered accountants should withdraw from the engagement.

31. Where there are departures from financial reporting standards which are not deemed to render the accounts misleading, provided that appropriate disclosures are made in the accounts the chartered accountants should include an explanatory paragraph in their report in order to highlight the departures concerned. An example of such a report for a non-charitable audit exempt company is contained in Appendix 3. However, if the departures are such that they render the accounts misleading then the chartered accountants should withdraw from the engagement.

Notification of withdrawal from engagement

32. The chartered accountants would normally explain to management their reasons for withdrawing from the engagement unless this would constitute a breach of legal or other regulatory requirement (such as the ‘tipping off’ provisions of the money laundering legislation).

Content of Accounts

Companies Incorporated Under The Companies Act 2006

33. The Companies Act 2006 requires that the accounts of a company shall give a true and fair view. A company’s accounts are subject to the accounting and disclosure requirements of the 2006 Act and applicable financial reporting standards/Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (FRSSE) and supporting pronouncements including, where relevant, a Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

Entities Incorporated Under Other Legislation

34. Accounts prepared for entities incorporated under other legislation should comply with relevant legislative requirements, all applicable financial reporting standards/FRSSE and supporting pronouncements including, where relevant, a SORP.

Unincorporated Entities

35. Unless there are specific reasons for not doing so (e.g. the chartered accountants have been asked to prepare a set of accounts on a receipts and payments basis for an applicable charity), accounts prepared by chartered accountants for unincorporated entities should comply with any applicable legislation, financial reporting standards/FRSSE and supporting pronouncements, including where relevant, a SORP.
36. Section 25 of the Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005) requires business profits to be computed in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice. However, it is recognised that it is not always necessary to prepare a full set of accounts in order to comply with this requirement.

Responsibility of Management

37. The chartered accountants may wish to obtain an acknowledgement from management in a letter of representation of its responsibility for the financial information supplied.

38. In the case of a company, the directors are responsible for ensuring that the company maintains adequate accounting records and for preparing accounts which give a true and fair view and have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006. In particular the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare accounts on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and for taking steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

39. The engagement to prepare the accounts cannot be regarded as providing assurance on the adequacy of the company's systems or on the incidence of fraud, non-compliance with laws and regulations or weaknesses in internal controls. Engaging chartered accountants to prepare the accounts does not relieve the directors of their responsibilities in this respect.

Management Approval of Accounts

40. The chartered accountants should obtain management's written approval of the accounts, normally evidenced by a signature on the balance sheet, prior to signing their report on the accounts.

41. For companies taking advantage of the audit exemption provisions of the Companies Act 2006, a statement to this effect is required on the balance sheet.

Reporting on an Accounts Preparation Engagement

42. The chartered accountants would normally attach a report to the accounts which they have prepared, to make clear to users the extent of their involvement with those accounts.

43. The report would normally include the following:

- (i) A title – identifying the persons to whom the report is addressed (in the case of a company this would be the Directors).
- (ii) A statement that, the chartered accountants have prepared the accounts as set out on pages xx to xx from the entity's accounting records and from information and explanations supplied by the client. The report may refer to the specific primary statements and notes to the accounts rather than the page numbers.
- (iii) A statement that the chartered accountants are subject to the ethical and professional requirements of the Institute which can be found at: <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>.
- (iv) A statement that the report is made to management in accordance with the terms of the engagement.
- (v) A statement that, to the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility will be accepted for the work or the report to anyone other than management as a body. For companies, the responsibility will be to the Company and its Board of Directors as a body.

- (vi) For companies, a statement that management have acknowledged their responsibility for maintaining adequate accounting records and for the preparation of accounts which show a true and fair view of the company's assets, liabilities, financial position and profit [/loss]. Statements of a similar nature may be applicable for other types of entity.
- (vii) A statement that the chartered accountants have not carried out an audit of the accounts, verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations supplied, and that the chartered accountants do not express any opinion on the accounts.
- (viii) The name, signature and address of the chartered accountants and any appropriate designation (but not 'Registered Auditor').
- (ix) The date of the report.

Whilst it is recommended that statements (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) above are included in the report issued to management, this is ultimately a risk management decision for each member firm.

44. The Appendices contain the following example reports:

- Appendix 2 - example of an accounts preparation report for a non-charitable audit exempt company;
- Appendix 3 - example of an accounts preparation report containing an explanatory paragraph for a non-charitable audit exempt company; and
- Appendix 4 - example of an accounts preparation report for a sole trader or partnership.

APPENDIX 1

Suggested Paragraphs for Inclusion in an Engagement Letter for an Accounts Preparation Assignment for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company

Your responsibilities as directors

- 1.1 As directors of the company, you are required to prepare accounts for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those accounts, you are required to:
- (a) select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
 - (b) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
 - (c) prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

- 1.2 You are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006 (the Act). You are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

- 1.3 You are responsible for determining whether, in respect of the year, the company meets the conditions for exemption from an audit set out in section 477 of the Act namely that:
- (a) it qualifies as a small company in relation to that year;
 - (b) its turnover in that year is not more than £6.5 million; and
 - (c) its balance sheet total for the year is not more than £3.26 million.

[If the company is a parent or subsidiary undertaking then additional criteria apply. Please refer to section 479 of the Companies Act 2006.]

- 1.4 You are responsible for determining whether, in respect of the year, the exemption is not available for any of the reasons set out in section 478 of the Act.

- 1.5 The exemption is available only if you, as directors, sign a declaration on the balance sheet stating that:

- (a) for the year ending *[insert date]*, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.
- (b) the members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in accordance with section 476 of the Act and
- (c) you acknowledge your obligations to keep adequate accounting records and to prepare accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs and of its profit or loss for the year.
- (d) The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

- 1.6 You have undertaken to make available to us, as and when required, all the company's accounting records and related financial information, including minutes of management and shareholders' meetings, necessary to carry out our work. You will make full disclosure to us of all relevant information.

2 Our responsibilities as accountants

- 2.1 As the company is totally exempt from audit, we have no statutory responsibilities to the company. Our only responsibilities arise from those specifically agreed upon between us in respect of other professional services.
- 2.2 We do not have the responsibility to report whether any shareholder of the company has notified the company that he or she requires an audit. Consequently we have no responsibility to carry out any work in respect of this matter.
- 2.3 Should our work indicate that the company is not entitled to exemption from an audit of the accounts, then we will inform you of this. In these circumstances, if appropriate, we will discuss with you the need to appoint an auditor.
- 2.4 We have a professional duty to prepare accounts that conform with generally accepted accounting principles. Furthermore, as directors, you have a duty to prepare accounts that comply with the Companies Act 2006 and applicable accounting standards.
- 2.5 We have a professional obligation to comply with best practice guidance issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland on the preparation of accounts.

3 Scope of work

- 3.1 Our work will not be an audit of the accounts in accordance with Auditing Standards. Accordingly, we will not obtain any evidence relating to entries in the accounting records, or to the accounts or to the disclosures in the accounts. Nor will we make any assessment of the estimates and judgements made by you in the preparation of the accounts. Consequently our work will not provide any assurance that the accounting records or the accounts are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud, or other irregularities or error. In addition, we have no responsibility to determine whether you have maintained adequate accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and we will not address this point unless you specifically request us in writing to do so.
- 3.2 Since we have not carried out an audit, nor confirmed in any way the accuracy or reasonableness of the accounting records maintained by the company, we are unable to provide any assurance as to whether the accounts that we prepare from those records present a true and fair view.
- 3.3 As part of our normal procedures when preparing the accounts, we will attach the accountants' report to them. This report will state that they have been prepared from the accounting records of the company and information and explanations supplied by the directors.
- 3.4 As part of our normal procedures we may request you to provide written confirmation of any information or explanations given to us orally during the course of our work.

APPENDIX 2

Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company

Report to the Directors on the preparation of the unaudited statutory accounts of XYZ Limited for the year ended ¹ ...*[insert year end]*

In order to assist you to fulfil your duties under the Companies Act 2006, we² have prepared for your approval the accounts of XYZ Limited for the year ended *[insert year end]* as set out on pages *[insert page numbers]*³ from the company's accounting records and from information and explanations you have given us.

As a practising member *[/member firm]* of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>.

[This report is made solely to the Board of Directors of XYZ Limited, as a body, in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated *[insert date]*.] Our work has been undertaken [solely to prepare for your approval the accounts of XYZ Limited and state those matters that we have agreed to state to the Board of Directors of XYZ Limited, as a body, in this report] in accordance with the requirements of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland as detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>. [To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than XYZ Limited and its Board of Directors as a body for our work or for this report.]

[It is your duty to ensure that XYZ Limited has kept adequate accounting records and to prepare statutory accounts that give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position and profit⁴*[/loss]* of XYZ Limited. You consider that XYZ Limited is exempt from the statutory audit requirement for the year.]

[We have not been instructed to carry out an audit or a review of the accounts of XYZ Limited. For this reason, we have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the statutory accounts.]

Signature.....

Typed name of accountant⁴
Chartered Accountants

Address



¹ © Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies (CCAB) 2009. All rights reserved. For further information, please go to www.ccab.org.uk.

² Professional accountants use 'I' in place of 'we,' 'my' in place of 'our' etc. as appropriate.

³ Reference may be made instead to the primary statements as opposed to the page numbers *[which comprise of [insert statements]]*.

⁴ The report is signed in the name of the professional accountant or, where appropriate, in the name of the accounting firm.

Date

APPENDIX 3

Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Non-Charitable Audit Exempt Company Containing an Explanatory Paragraph

Report to the Directors on the preparation of the unaudited statutory accounts of XYZ Limited for the year ended⁵... *[insert year end]*

In order to assist you to fulfill your duties under the Companies Act 2006, we⁶ have prepared for your approval the accounts of XYZ Limited for the year ended *[insert year end]* as set out on pages *[insert page numbers]*⁷ from the company's accounting records and from information and explanations you have given us.

As a practising member *[/ member firm]* of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>.

[This report is made solely to the Board of Directors of XYZ Limited, as a body, in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated *[insert date]*]. Our work has been undertaken [solely to prepare for your approval the accounts of XYZ Limited and state those matters that we have agreed to state to the Board of Directors of XYZ Limited, as a body, in this report] in accordance with the requirements of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland as detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>. [To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than XYZ Limited and its Board of Directors as a body for our work or for this report.]

[It is your duty to ensure that XYZ Limited has kept adequate accounting records and to prepare statutory accounts that give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position and profit^[/ loss] of XYZ Limited. You consider that XYZ Limited is exempt from the statutory audit requirement for the year.]

[We have not been instructed to carry out an audit or a review of the accounts of XYZ Limited. For this reason, we have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the statutory accounts.]

We draw your attention to note x in the accounts which discloses and explains a departure from applicable accounting standards. The company has not depreciated its goodwill held in the accounts in the year and this is a departure from the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (Effective April 2008) and from the Companies Act 2006.

Signature.....

Typed name of accountant⁸
Chartered Accountants

⁵ © Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies (CCAB), 2009. All rights reserved. For further information, please go to www.ccab.org.uk.

⁶ Professional accountants use 'I' in place of 'we,' 'my' in place of 'our' etc. as appropriate.

⁷ Reference may be made instead to the primary statements as opposed to the page numbers *[which comprise of [insert statements]]*.

⁸ The report is signed in the name of the professional accountant or, where appropriate, in the name of the accounting firm.

Address

Date

APPENDIX 4

Illustrative Example of Chartered Accountants' Report in Relation to Preparation of Accounts for a Sole Trader or Partnership

Report to the Owner(s)/Partners/ Management on the Unaudited Accounts of XYZ

In accordance with the engagement letter dated *[insert date]* we⁹ have prepared for your approval the accounts of XYZ for the year ended *[insert year end]* as set out on pages *[insert page numbers]*¹⁰ from the accounting records and information and explanations you have given us.

As a practising member *[/member firm]* of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>.

[This report is made solely to you, in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated *[insert date]*.] Our work has been undertaken solely to prepare for your approval the accounts of XYZ and state those matters that we have agreed to state to you in accordance with the requirements of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland as detailed at <http://www.icas.org.uk/accountspreparationguidance>. [To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than you, for our work or for this report.]

[We have not been instructed to carry out an audit or a review of the accounts of XYZ. For this reason, we have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the accounts.]

Signature.....

Typed name of accountant¹¹

Address

Date

⁹ Professional accountants use 'I' in place of 'we,' 'my' in place of 'our' etc. as appropriate.

¹⁰ Reference may be made instead to the primary statements as opposed to the page numbers *[which comprise of [insert statements]]*.

¹¹ The report is signed in the name of the professional accountant or, where appropriate, in the name of the accounting firm.