Careers in accounting
After completing this course, the learner should be able to:

- Identify different types of work accountants are engaged in
- Identify places an accountant can work and positions available

Program level: Basic
Field of study: Personal Development
Program prerequisite: None
Advance preparation: None
This course will be an overview of:

- Accounting's specialized areas
- Different careers available to accountants
- How the role of an accountant varies by organization and function
Major topic/concept index

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Introduction
Introduction

Overview

An accounting degree offers greater flexibility and advancement opportunities for those who wish to work in accounting or finance. Accounting career paths commonly include public accounting, academia, corporate accounting, government, and non-profit organizations.

Public accountants can perform a variety of accounting tasks, including but not limited to auditing, tax, and consulting activities. Their clients may be companies, governmental entities, non-profit organizations, or individuals.

Some public accountants focus on tax matters, such as advising companies about the tax advantages and disadvantages of certain business decisions or preparing individual or corporate income tax returns.

Other public accountants audit financial statements and prepare reports to offer assurance to external stakeholders on the fairness of the financial statements and management's assessment of internal controls.

Example: Career paths

- **Bookkeeper.** Some accounting roles, such as bookkeepers and clerical positions, may not require a bachelor's accounting degree. These positions may only require an associate's degree or some experience.
- **Staff accountant.** Most employers will expect a bachelor's degree for a staff accountant role.
- **Accounting manager.** In most cases, an accounting manager is expected to have at least a bachelor's degree along with professional experience.
- **Chief financial officer (CFO).** A CFO typically has a graduate degree and professional experience.

The greater an accountant's education, the more opportunities that will generally be available to them.
Introduction

Specialization

In addition to the more traditional areas of accounting, such as financial accounting, managerial accounting, taxation, and auditing, as technology grows and business models evolve, the field is generating more opportunities in specialization areas.

Specialization areas include but are not limited to:

• Actuarial accounting
• Capital budgeting and analysis
• Environmental and sustainability accounting
• Forensic accounting
• Accounting information systems and technology
• Business valuation
• Personal financial planning

Example: Forensic accounting

Forensic accountants investigate bankruptcies and contract disputes, white-collar crimes including securities fraud and embezzlement, and other complex, perhaps criminal, financial transactions.
Financial accountants

Financial accountants work within an organization and focus on the evaluation and recording of business transactions and financial statement reporting, presentation, and disclosure for external stakeholders. Financial accountants generally adhere to a standardized framework such as U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) or International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

External stakeholders

External stakeholders are anyone with an interest in the success of the company who does not have inside information or access, including but not limited to:

- Stockholders
- Potential investors
- Creditors
- Suppliers
- Customers
- Employees
- Business associates

External stakeholders are reliant upon the accuracy of the information presented in a company's annual and quarterly financial reports.
Financial accountants (continued)

Common responsibilities of financial accountants include:

• Transaction analysis
• Account reconciliation and analysis
• Ongoing monitoring of new accounting guidance and standards
• Regulatory compliance

Key point: Financial accountants working for publicly traded corporations are responsible for filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), including the annual Form 10-K and quarterly 10-Qs, which include consolidated financial statements along with relevant footnote disclosures.
Management accountants

Management accountants work within companies, often as part of an executive team involved in strategic planning or new product development.

They may be referred to as cost, managerial, industrial, corporate, or private accountants. Their responsibilities include:

• Budgeting
• Planning
• Controlling
• Cost accounting and decision-making
• Analyzing and interpreting financial information needed by company executives to make business decisions.
Government accountants and auditors work in the public sector, including federal, state, and local governments and agencies. They follow the guidelines of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) or the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB). Their responsibilities include:

• Maintaining and examining the records of government agencies

• Auditing private businesses and individuals whose activities are subject to government regulations or taxation

• Ensuring that revenues received and expenditures made by federal, state, or local governments conform with laws and regulations
External auditors

External auditors are the auditors who work with public accounting firms. The firms are typically hired by management, the board of directors, or others charged with corporate governance to audit an entity’s financial statements and provide assurance regarding the fairness of the statements based on an established financial reporting framework such as U.S. GAAP.

Subsequent to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, the external auditors for publicly traded companies must also provide an opinion on management's assessment of internal controls.

The report of the external auditor, typically referred to as the "Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm," is filed with the SEC along with the company's consolidated financial statements.
Internal auditors work within companies and focus on the organization’s effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance obligations. Their responsibilities include:

- Verifying the effectiveness of the company's internal controls
- Searching for mismanagement, waste, or fraud
- Evaluating financial and information systems, management procedures, and internal controls to make sure that records are accurate, and controls are adequate
- Reviewing company operations to enhance efficiency and ensure compliance with corporate policies and government regulations

**Key point:** Internal auditors have a significant responsibility. To comply with the requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, management must attest to the effectiveness of the organization's internal controls. While the controls are ultimately the responsibility of management, they often rely upon much of the work performed by the internal audit group in making their assessment.
Self-employed accountants

A self-employed accountant is one who does not work specifically for an individual company or firm. They will generally offer their services and expertise to a variety of clients, which might include individuals, small businesses, or other organizations. The types of services offered can vary substantially depending on the expertise of the individual but might include:

- Preparation of tax returns, forms, and other documentation
- Management advisory services
- Financial or retirement planning
- Bookkeeping or other accounting functions
- Asset and investment management
- Accounting system implementation and maintenance
2

Types of work
Financial statement audit

Financial statement audit work involves the review of a company's internal financial records along with analysis and testing adequate to gain comfort over the fairness of the financial statements and accompanying disclosures.

Auditors rely on both statistical and nonstatistical sampling techniques to reach conclusions regarding a certain account or population of transactions.

As much of the data gathering and number crunching is computerized, it's increasingly important for auditors to be familiar with accounting information systems and possess higher level analytical skills.

Note: Financial statement audit work often involves extensive travel to client locations.
Types of work

Tax

Tax accountants can work in either public accounting firms or for private companies.

Depending on their role, they may prepare individual income tax returns or income tax returns for businesses, such as corporations, partnerships, and S corporations.

Additionally, tax accountants also serve in an advisory capacity providing clients or management with recommendations on the minimization or deferral of taxes related to revenues, expenses, acquisitions, dispositions, mergers, and other business events.

Example: Areas of tax accounting

Common areas of tax accounting include federal income taxes, state and local income taxes, property taxes, sales and use taxes, international taxation, import/export taxes, transactional taxation issues, and compensation and benefits.
### Types of work

**Budget analysis**

- Budget analysts develop and manage an organization's financial plans.
- Besides quantitative skills, many budget analyst jobs require good interpersonal and communication skills due to the requirement that negotiations be conducted.

**Note:** For a person working in this role, an important part of the job is being able to identify and investigate significant variances between the budget and actual results. This often involves communication with departmental and operational managers.
Types of work

Financial accounting

• Financial accountants prepare financial statements based on GAAP or another established financial reporting framework.

• They participate in important financial decisions involving mergers and acquisitions, employee benefits, and long-term financial projections.

• This work requires a good understanding of both accounting and finance.

Key point: Financial accountants working for publicly traded corporations have additional responsibilities as they must prepare and submit filings to the SEC to maintain regulatory compliance.
Management accounting

- Management accountants participate in decisions about capital budgeting and line of business analysis.

- Major functions can include cost analysis, analysis of new contracts, and participation in efforts to control expenses efficiently.

- This work can involve the analysis of the structure of organizations.
Academia

Accountants may work in a variety of capacities in education and academia.

• Accountants can teach accounting courses at the college level for community colleges, four-year degree granting institutions, and even in graduate or doctoral-level programs.

• Accountants may also work in career education teaching continuing professional education (CPE) courses, conducting accounting seminars and conferences, and developing educational materials.

Note: The requirements to work in academia vary greatly depending on the role of the accountant and the institution.

Examples: Working in academia

• An accountant teaching for a community college may only need a master's degree along with some professional experience.

• An accountant hoping to teach for a large public university will likely need a doctoral degree along with experience and peer-reviewed publications.

• For an accountant wishing to teach in career education conducting seminars or CPE courses, the organization may be more concerned with professional designations, such as CPA, CMA, etc.
Internal audit

Internal auditors work within an organization to assess and improve internal controls and operational efficiency.

• Their role often includes the testing and evaluation of internal processes and procedures, including recommendations for improvement.

• Internal auditors may also be tasked with a variety of compliance-related tasks and reviews.

Note: While the internal auditors work for a company, they should report directly to the audit committee of the board of directors rather than reporting to the company’s management. This helps to reduce bias and familiarity threats that may exist if reporting directly to management.
Types of work

IT audit

As most companies rely heavily on automated internal controls and accounting information systems for financial reporting, accounting firms should be prepared to effectively audit the client's information technology (IT) system. This may include but is not limited to:

- Examination and evaluation of an organization's IT and infrastructure
- Examination and testing of controls, policies, and operating effectiveness of IT

With the increasing use of technology, it is imperative for both management, internal auditors and external auditors to continually assess and test the system through which all information flows.
Forensic accounting

Forensic accounting refers to the investigation and skeptical examination of financial information to determine if there are any wrongdoings, improprieties, fraud, or other misleading information.

Forensic accountants must have a high degree of technical accounting knowledge, IT skills, and solid investigative, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Forensic accountants should also have good professional communication skills as they are often called as expert witnesses during civil or criminal trials.

Accountants interested in this career path may want to pursue a professional designation, such as:

- Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE)
- Certified Forensic Accountant (CRFAC)
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Places an accountant can work
Places an accountant can work

Public accounting firm

• Public accountants work in partnerships that provide accounting services to individuals, businesses, and governments.

• The largest, high-profile public accounting firms are known as the Big Four and dominate the field of accounting:
  - KPMG
  - Deloitte
  - PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)
  - Ernst & Young (EY)

• According to the AICPA, there are currently more than 46,000 public accounting firms in the United States. These firms range in size from small local accounting practices to large international public accounting firms.6

Key point: The Big Four public accounting firms serve mostly large companies and organizations, while other firms cater more to individuals and small to medium-sized companies.
 Consulting firm

Consulting firms may function somewhat like accounting firms but typically offer a wider variety of services.

• Consulting firms may focus on the services that accounting firms are prohibited from offering their audit clients, such as management advisory services.

• Additionally, consulting firms can choose to specialize in certain areas or industries depending on demand and marketability.
Places an accountant can work

Corporation or company

- Corporations can be publicly held or privately owned.
- They can be small, consisting of as few as one shareholder and one employee, or they can be a Fortune 500 company, with thousands of shareholders and employees.

Key point: The size of the company significantly affects the responsibilities of the accounting staff. Smaller companies will generally rely on a small staff who will, in turn, have a greater variety of responsibilities. Meanwhile, larger companies will have a larger staff, enabling each person to work in a more specialized role while dealing with more complex issues and transactions.

Example: Small company vs. large company

- Small Company A operates as a limited liability company (LLC) owned by Arnold Smith. He employs 25 people. Arnold's only "accounting" staff is a full-time bookkeeper, Donna. She handles payroll, billing, cash collections, payables, and bank reconciliations. Arnold reviews her work on a regular basis and hires a local CPA to take care of their tax filings.

- Large Corporation C has 12,000 employees globally. Their corporate accounting staff consists of 45 employees separated into departments including general accounting, SEC financial reporting, cost accounting, tax accounting, accounts receivable, accounts payable, fixed assets, financial planning, and payroll.
Places an accountant can work

Governmental entity

- Government accountants can work at the local, state, or federal level.

- They can have responsibility for administering and formulating budgets, tracking costs, and analyzing programs.

- Government accounting offers advancement in most organizations to controller and possibly to higher administrative positions.

- Places that hire heavily at the federal level include the Department of Defense, the General Accounting Office, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
Places an accountant can work

Academic institution

- Certified public accountants (CPAs) may work as educators on the faculty of colleges of business administration, professional schools of accountancy, graduate schools of business, and community colleges.

- They teach students in areas such as auditing, financial accounting, taxes, cost and managerial accounting, professional ethics, accounting information systems, governmental accounting, and forensic accounting.

- CPAs in academia generally are expected to expand the body of accounting knowledge through their writing and research.

- Many CPA educators also put their expertise to work by serving as consultants to companies and firms and as expert witnesses in litigation.

- CPAs working in academia may also be recruited to serve on the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.

Note: A CPA hoping to teach for a large public or private university will likely need a doctoral degree. The AICPA offers many scholarship opportunities for accounting students at varying points in their academic careers. For example, the William (Bill) Ezzell Scholarship provides financial assistance to CPAs pursuing their Ph.D.'s in accounting. Details can be found at: https://www.aicpa.org/about/affiliates/aicpafoundation/bill-ezzell-scholarship.html.
Non-profit organization

- Non-profit organizations operate in similar ways to traditional companies, although their missions are different.
- They employ accountants as well but tend to have smaller administrative budgets.
- Non-profits can be subject to different rules and have different reporting obligations than their for-profit counterparts.
Sole proprietor

• Some accountants decide to open their own practices.

• This requires they generate their own business but allows greater flexibility and independence, as well as direct client contact.

• The financial risks are higher, but the rewards can be significant.
Places an accountant can work

Audit committee member of boards of directors

• Accountants can serve as the financial expert required, by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX), on the audit committees of public reporting companies.

• CPAs are also needed on the audit committees of private companies, non-profit organizations, and government agencies.\(^2\)
4 Positions available
Positions available

Public accounting firm

Staff positions

Accountants at the staff level usually have 0–3 years of experience.

• **Staff auditor**
  
  — A staff auditor performs the detailed work of a financial audit, supervised by a senior auditor. After about two years of experience, staff auditors begin directing small audits.

• **Tax staff**
  
  — Under the supervision of a tax senior or tax manager, a tax staff person will prepare tax returns, research tax questions, and advise clients regarding tax issues.\(^2\)
Positions available

Public accounting firm (continued)

• Management services/consulting staff

  – This position provides various consulting and management advisory services. The management services/consulting staff person will also review the integrity of client systems, supervised by a senior or manager.²

Note: While it may vary substantially depending on the client base and the types of services offered, many management consulting firms seek employees with higher level experience in management or specialized expertise in a given area or industry.
Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Federal tax associate (staff)³¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are currently seeking an Associate to join our Federal Tax practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Primary responsibilities will consist of tax consulting and tax return preparation duties, including tax research, tax planning, and the preparation of supporting work papers for various tax returns and tax related projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with a variety of entities such as corporations, partnerships, estates, trusts, and non-profits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities within its Federal, State and Local Tax, International Tax, Strategic Federal Tax, and Private Wealth Service lines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Major and overall minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bachelor's or Master's degree in Accounting, Juris Doctorate, or Tax LLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Completion of necessary education hours to be eligible for CPA licensure or licensed attorney status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excellent analytical, communication (written and verbal), and interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public accounting firm (continued)

Seniors or senior associates

Seniors or senior associates generally have 3–6 years of experience.

- **Senior auditor**

  - A senior auditor's responsibilities may include directing audit field work, delegating detailed work to staff auditors, and reviewing their work papers. A senior auditor may also put together financial statements and make recommendations to improve internal controls.

  - This position level is generally supervised by an audit manager.  


Public accounting firm (continued)

• Tax senior

  – A tax senior prepares or reviews tax returns for individuals and organizations and researches tax questions. Other responsibilities may include making recommendations regarding tax planning and identifying opportunities for potential tax savings.

  – This position generally reports to a tax manager or tax partner.²

• Management services/consulting senior

  – This accountant's responsibilities include performing and supervising detailed consulting assignments that may encompass a variety of functional areas within client organizations.

  – This position generally reports to a manager or partner.²
Example: Sample job description—Audit senior associate

Description:
We are currently seeking a Senior Associate in Products + Services to join us in our [location] office.

Responsibilities:
Positively impact your client's financial statements, profitability, and business operations through:

• Proactively engaging with your clients throughout the year to gather needed information to complete testing and respond to questions raised
• Planning and supervising the execution of all audit engagement activities
• Reviewing and performing substantive testing on clients' balance sheets and income statements
• Conducting and reviewing tests to assess deficiencies in internal controls and make recommendations for improvement
• Playing an active role in discussions with the Manager and Partner relative to business recommendations resulting from testing performed and information gathered
• Make judgments on significant estimates or assumptions that management made when they prepared the financial report
Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Audit senior associate²⁰,²¹ (continued)

Qualifications:

• Considerable knowledge of public accounting audit practices and procedures.
• Considerable knowledge of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles in the United States (U.S. GAAP), United States Generally Accepted Accounting Standards (U.S. GAAS) and the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) standards.
• Thorough knowledge of first level review of basic audit work reports produced by associates.
• Degree in accounting or an undergraduate degree with sufficient course work to sit for the CPA exam.
• CPA preferred or actively pursuing completion of exam.
Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Assurance senior associate

Description:

The Audit Senior will be responsible for coordinating the day-to-day "in-charge" duties of planning, fieldwork and "wrap-up" to include the preparing of financial statements with disclosures, applying most areas of GAAP as necessary and documenting, validating, testing and assessing various control systems. This position is also responsible for acting as the client contact for basic questions and information and may be involved in reviews and agreed-upon procedure engagements.

Knowledge Preferred:

- Superior analytical and diagnostic skills and ability to break down complex issues and implement appropriate resolutions
- Capable of working in a demanding, deadline-driven environment with a focus on details and accuracy
- Solid project management skills
- One (1) or more years of prior supervisory experience preferred
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite, specifically Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Prior experience with various assurance applications and research tools beneficial
Public accounting firm  (continued)

Manager

Managers generally have 5–6 or more years of experience.

- **Audit manager**
  - An audit manager supervises, trains, and evaluates seniors and staff.
  - He or she is responsible for approving audit programs, scheduling personnel, reviewing audit work papers, approving the footnotes to financial statement disclosures, maintaining day-to-day client relationships, and overseeing project invoices.
  - Promotion to manager is typically reserved for employees seen as having partner potential.²
Positions available

Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Audit manager

The external audit services include:

- Audits of financial statements, including reviews of quarterly financial information
- Audits of internal control over financial reporting including Sarbanes-Oxley Section 404
- Agreed-Upon Procedures engagements
- Other attest related services

Most managers oversee the day-to-day operations of multiple engagements and are involved with legal, regulatory, and accounting issues that arise during the audit engagement. Managers have responsibility for the supervision of staff and management of services to clients, which includes preparation of the audit strategy, setting and monitoring budgets, scheduling audits, selecting staff and assigning workloads, leveraging artificial intelligence, advanced analytics and data visualizations, process flow automation to perform data interrogation and analysis of client data, and financial reporting. They must develop and motivate their engagement staff and provide them with counseling and career guidance. Managers have control over, and exercise wide latitude and discretionary decision-making in establishing the most advantageous course of action for the successful management of each audit engagement. They draft and assist in the delivery of proposals for engagements and know the range of services. Managers must have deep technical experience and are expected to develop expertise in a given industry/service line. They provide leadership in the timely delivery of quality services that aim to exceed the expectations of clients.
Public accounting firm (continued)

• Tax manager
  – A tax manager directs and reviews the work of staff and senior tax staff.
  – Responsibilities include approving corporate tax returns prepared by audit staff, consulting with audit staff as needed, researching unusual tax matters, and conducting tax planning and preparation for individuals, estates, trusts, and small businesses.
  – Promotion to manager is typically reserved for employees seen as having partner potential.²
Public accounting firm (continued)

• Management services/consulting manager
  
  — This accountant maintains direct contact with corporate personnel.
  
  — He or she has responsibility for internal and operational control procedures, operational budgets, business financing, analyses of projects or departments, and special projects/studies.
  
  — Promotion to manager is typically reserved for employees seen as having partner potential.
Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Tax technology and transformation—quantitative services—manager

Description:

Tax Technology and Transformation offers services to companies in response to the impact of existing and emerging technology, including the growing data burden that many businesses face, driving efficiencies to create a cost-effective tax function and the need to understand how to make data an asset.

Responsibilities:

• Work on a variety of tax engagements, developing and incorporating technology solutions to address complex tax issues and support our clients' tax function
• Build and manage client relationships and deliver international tax services that exceed client expectations
• Develop custom tools and workflows based upon evolving federal and state regulations
• Develop client-specific applications to facilitate the collection and analysis of complex and large amounts of data
• Work with clients' internal tax and IT departments to design and build appropriate technology solutions based on their unique business environment and reporting requirements
• Gain experience working with commercial capitalization/depreciation systems, such as Sage Fixed Assets – Depreciation (FAS), BNA Fixed Assets, and fixed asset modules within Oracle and SAP (and numerous other systems)
Public accounting firm (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Tax technology and transformation—quantitative services—manager

Tax Technology and Transformation is composed of

- Digital tax transformation
- Tax applications-as-a-service
- Tax data and improvement
- Tax analytics and reporting enhancement
- Emerging tax technology, including robotic process automation (RPA), artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, cloud solutions, data lake development and business intelligence innovation
- Tax technology program mobilization
- Custom tax technology application development and deployment
- Tax technology strategy and road mapping
- Direct and indirect tax systems implementation and configuration
- Post-transaction (M&A) tax function operational services
- Tax operating model transformation, including process improvement, risk and controls
- Tax function assessments
Example: Sample job description—Tax technology and transformation—quantitative services—manager (continued)

Knowledge Preferred

Ideally, you will also have at least one of the following:

- Experience in one or more of the following: Alteryx, Microsoft Power BI suite (including Power Pivot, Power Query, Power View and Power Map), SQL Server, Microsoft Visual Basic, Visual Basic for Applications, MS Access
- Knowledge and experience in the design and development of databases (specifically SQL Server)
- Experience with developing ETL solutions using SSIS or other tools
- ERP experience, including SAP and/or Oracle
- Experience managing large, multidisciplinary projects that impact tax (e.g., ERP implementations, tax co-sourcing engagements, finance transformations)
- Practical or academic experience with commercial capitalization systems, such as Sage Fixed Assets – Depreciation, BNA Fixed Assets, and PowerPlan
- Practical or academic experience in standard process analysis tools, process mapping, and flow chart diagramming
- Practical or academic experience designing and developing databases
- Ability to quickly understand complex tax concepts and a strong interest in data modeling and analysis
Positions available

Public accounting firm (continued)

Senior manager or director

• A senior manager or director typically has more than 6 years of experience and has been promoted to the level just below partner/managing director.

• The senior manager's next promotion step will be to partner (or in some CPA firms, managing director).
Example: Sample job description—Audit senior manager

**Description:**
Work as a team member on diverse client engagements as part of our national and local Audit practice. Our clients include local, national and internationally recognized manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers with diverse organizational structures operating in a variety of sectors, including apparel & home furnishings, retail, food & beverage, health & beauty, recreation & fitness, household products, broadcasting, publishing, printing, to name just a few. Helping consumer-focused companies improve their performance through the most challenging business cycles.

**Responsibilities:**
In this role, provide timely high-quality client service. Access risk along with design and communicate audit procedures to engagement teams. Understand and utilize audit methodology. Manage multiple engagements and oversee engagement status and ensure milestones are met. Identify technical accounting matters early and assess impact on financial statements. Use firm specialist as needed. Review work of senior associates, supervisors and managers. Provide insightful business advice. Ensure professional development through ongoing education. Manage profitability of projects.
Public accounting firm (continued)

Partner or managing director

• The highest level of management in a CPA firm is the partner level.

• Partners have overarching responsibility for all client-related activities.

• About 2 percent of those who work in CPA firms will reach this level.

• A partner normally buys an equity interest in the firm and shares in all profits.

• Typically, a professional must be a CPA to become a partner.

• In larger firms, an equivalent position of principal is available to non-CPAs.\(^2\)

Note: In some large firms, managing directors are different from partners although they often have the same rights and responsibilities as partners. In these firms, managing directors are considered the highest level of employees because they do not own the firm, unlike the partners.
Public accounting firm (continued)

Technology across public accounting firms

Most experts agree that while the need for professional auditors will not be eliminated, the role can be expected to change substantially, especially given technological changes and automation.

• Technology is continuously changing and driving big change through data analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain.

• Firms should continue to learn new skills and implement them into practice.

Key point: To remain competitive, firms should embrace technology and develop a culture of continuous learning and improvement, professional development, and the pursuit of new opportunities and methodologies.
Positions available

Consulting firm

Positions available in consulting firms can be similar to those in accounting firms.

- Staff or analyst
- Senior or associate
- Manager or director
- Senior manager, senior director, or associate principal
- Partner or managing director
Consulting firm\(^3\) (continued)

Some of the most well-known consulting firms, aside from the Big Four consulting practices, include the following:

- McKinsey & Company
- The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.
- Bain & Company
- Accenture
- Oliver Wyman
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- L.E.K Consulting
- Cisco Systems Consulting
- AT Kearney
- The Brattle Group
- Bridgespan Group
- Infosys Consulting
- IBM Global Business Services
Positions available

Consulting firm (continued)

Example: McKinsey & Co.34

**Generalist and practice-based consultant positions:**

- Business Analyst/Fellow
- Junior Associate
- Associate
- Engagement Manager, Associate Principal, Partner

**Subject matter expert positions:**

- Associate
- Junior Specialist/Specialist
- Fellow
- Expert/Senior Expert
- Implementation Coach/Senior Implementation Coach
- Implementation Leader
- Knowledge Specialist, Knowledge Expert, Senior Knowledge Expert
Consulting firm (continued)

Example: McKinsey & Co.³⁴ (continued)

Business Analyst

Business Analysts are responsible for a small part of the problem solving for each engagement. Individuals with fewer than 4 years of work experience and an undergraduate or master’s degree. The position varies based on geographic location within McKinsey.

Junior Associate

This role is offered in select McKinsey locations, so candidates generally should apply to it if directed to do so by a specific recruiting team. Requires exceptional analytical and quantitative problem-solving skills.

Associate

Will likely intersect with many elements of our firm’s work including Digital, Analytics, Implementation—either by collaborating on teams or working with colleagues from these groups.
Consulting firm (continued)


Engagement Manager
Engagement Managers are responsible for the client problem needing to be solved and lead the day to day execution.

Associate Principal
Associate Principals are partners-in-training. They work on multiple engagements at once.

Partner
Partner is the highest level of achievement at Kinsey and other consulting firms.
Consulting firm (continued)

Example: Bain & Co.

Bain offers consulting in a variety of areas including:

• Strategy
• Marketing & Sales
• Private Equity
• Cost Transformation
• Organization
• Digital Delivery (VectorSM)
• Agile
• Mergers & Acquisitions
• Client Learning Programs
• Sustainability
• Transformation
• Procurement
• Operations
Consulting firm (continued)

Example: Bain & Co. (continued)

The Bain career progression is as follows:

- Associate Consultant
- Consultant
- Case Team Leader
- Manager
- Principal
- Partner
Corporation or company

CPAs can work in businesses that range from smaller, family-owned companies to large, Fortune 500 companies. These accountants are considered strategic business partners within the organization. Work performed spans a variety of different areas.

Staff

CPAs in staff positions generally have 0–3 years of experience.²

- **Financial accounting and reporting staff**
  - These accountants perform detailed work assignments in one or more areas, including accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, property, general ledger, and financial statements.
  - They generally are supervised by a senior accountant.
Positions available

Corporation or company (continued)

• Management accounting staff
  - These accountants collect detailed cost data and may be responsible for preliminary cost analyses and preparing relevant reports for upper management.
  - They generally are supervised by a senior or manager.²

• Tax accounting staff
  - These accountants prepare tax returns or various schedules for review.
  - They generally are supervised by a senior or manager.²
  - The returns can be in a variety of subject areas, including federal income tax, international tax, state and local tax, compensation and benefits tax, and mergers and acquisitions tax.
Corporation or company (continued)

• **Internal audit staff**
  
  — Internal audit staff conduct compliance audits.
  
  — They have responsibility for testing internal controls and information systems.
  
  — They generally are supervised by a senior or manager.²
Corporation or company (continued)

Senior staff

These individuals generally have 3–6 years of experience.

- **Financial accounting and reporting senior**
  - This position supervises the work performed by staff in accounts receivable, accounts payable, and/or financial reporting.
  - These accountants may be responsible for the preparation of special reports or specific analysis of financial data.\(^2\)
Example: Financial accounting and reporting senior analyst

Description:

Responsibilities

- **35% Financial Reporting**
  - Assist the Financial Reporting Lead in the preparation and review of accurate monthly financial reporting packages and financial statements that reflect the activities of the business.
  - Use US GAAP fundamentals to determine/propose appropriate accounting treatment and leverage the accounting and finance centers of expertise and process advisors as needed to ensure accurate financial statements.
  - Support monthly reporting and business financial reviews including analyzing, understanding and discussing the key drivers of the financial results with the business.

- **25% Partnering**
  - Collaborate with offshore accounting teams, other accounting domains and peers to ensure the business's financial information is accurate, complete and timely.
Corporation or company (continued)

Example: Financial accounting and reporting senior analyst²⁴ (continued)

Responsibilities (continued)

- Coach, train and mentor offshore and professional team members on technical topics, company policies and best practices.
- Build strong relationships with business partners to have honest conversations about US GAAP treatment, guidance and financial insights.

• 20% Continuous Improvement
  - Collaborate across business process owners and providers to streamline processes and drive accountability for accurate business financial statements.
  - Identify and implement best practices to drive process simplification, standardization and optimization.
  - Leverage processes and technologies to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

• 10% Financial Controls
  - Support the quarterly financial statement certification process and related follow-up actions as required.

• 10% various other duties
Positions available

Corporation or company (continued)

Example: Financial accounting and reporting senior analyst (continued)

Requirements:

• Bachelor's Degree in Accounting or Finance
• 7+ years of financial reporting experience using U.S. GAAP principles
• Experience in analyzing and reviewing financial statements
• Preferred CPA, MBA or other advanced degree
• Demonstrated strong problem solving and analytical skills
• Familiarity with SAP/JDE/NIS and other integrated business systems
Positions available

Corporation or company (continued)

• Management accounting senior
  – This individual is generally responsible for a segment of the overall management accounting system.
  – He or she may be assigned special or project cost studies.

• Tax accounting senior
  – This individual handles income taxes (federal, state, local), sales tax, property tax, payroll tax, and/or international tax.\(^2\)
  – He or she may also supervise staff-level tax accountants.
Positions available

Corporation or company (continued)

- **Internal audit senior**
  - This individual supervises testing of the organization's internal controls and accounting information systems.
  - Senior internal auditors may conduct statistical samples of document approval or perform special tests to uncover defalcations.
  - They may conduct operational audits in order to identify opportunities to improve profits.²
Example: Internal audit senior

Description:

Responsible for reviewing accounting, financial and operating controls and identifying control weaknesses, ensuring that our company assets are safeguarded and in compliance with corporate policies and procedures. Plan and perform financial, operational, and compliance audits. After conducting these audits, you will identify control weaknesses and make recommendations to management on how to reduce the risks. You will want to have the ability to identify and test key controls, be financial-focused, demand accuracy and have a high attention to detail.

Responsibilities:

• Design and develop audit programs to ensure control weaknesses are identified and action plans are crafted and implemented
• Prepare work papers to document audit procedures performed to meet professional standards and expectations of internal audits
• Summarize post audit reports and recommendations in preparation for presentation to senior leaders
• Facilitate and/or participate in discussions of findings and recommendations with appropriate leadership
Corporation or company (continued)

Example: Internal audit senior (continued)

Requirements:

- Bachelors degree required—preferred areas of study include Accounting, Business, Finance, Economics or other relevant discipline
- CPA or CIA certification required
- 4 to 6 years of internal audit work or external experience with exposure to internal audit concepts
- Public accounting and Sarbanes-Oxley experience preferred
- Ability to understand and visually map end-to-end processes
Corporation or company (continued)

Management

A company management accountant typically has 6 or more years of experience.

• Financial accounting and reporting manager
  – An accountant at this level typically assists the controller.
  – He or she may be responsible for one of the functional areas of the organization, such as financial accounting, or budgetary planning and control.
  – This individual coordinates and supervises personnel who are responsible for detailed accounting entries, internal financial reporting, and financial statements.\textsuperscript{2}
Example: Financial accounting manager sample job description

**Description:** Assures the integrity of financial and statistical data, review of general ledger entries, reports, schedules, worksheets, reconciliations or other analysis. Identifies, establishes and implements internal controls to ensure a compliant environment. Interprets and implements accounting rules, fiscal compliance, policies and regulations. Directs staff in preparation of and reviews and interprets results of variable-sensitive business models and/or compliance or fiscal management tools. Directs and coordinates analytical, financial, accounting, and compliance support to department and institutional leadership.

**Responsibilities**

- Forecast IT storage and computing expenses
- Model financially the funnel of potential investments in platform activities that may involve minority or majority ownership, joint ventures, new company formations, and mergers and acquisition
- Build new consolidated financial reports and develop analyses for the summarized platform segment and for individual platform service lines, including full balance sheet and income statement views
- Perform deep-dive analytics around patient or other volume-based activity, service line dynamics, profitability vertically and horizontally, key metrics and trends associated with platform businesses (e.g., Home Hospital Platform, Clinical Data Analytics Platform, Advanced Digital Diagnostic Platform, etc.)
Corporation or company (continued)

- **Management accounting manager**
  
  - An individual in this position directs the staff with responsibility for developing and modifying the management accounting system.
  
  - He or she may be responsible for developing methods of product costing and/or cost control.
  
  - Other responsibilities may include ensuring timely and accurate labor, material, and overhead; preparing special cost studies; and reviewing overhead cost allocation.²
Corporation or company (continued)

Example: Manager of cost accounting

Description:

The individual will partner with the director of accounting to oversee cost control systems, inventory closing, and valuation processes. Additionally, they will manage and interpret variances, gather historical cost data, compare budgets with actual expenses, prepare costing reports and make recommendations for presentation to the executive team. They will also partner with operations personnel at both the corporate and plant level to create key metrics to achieve improvements in productivity and efficiency.

Responsibilities:

- Verifies proper inventory valuation through valuation methodologies in accordance with GAAP and Company policies
- Verifying accurate standard costs
- Compile product costs including direct labor, raw materials, and overhead on a quarterly basis and sign off on final costing
- Partner with all Manufacturing plants and Sales to ensure achievement of cost, productivity, accuracy, or timeliness objectives
- Assist budgeting and forecasting process for Operations
- Proficiency in Netsuite is a plus
Positions available

Corporation or company (continued)

• Tax manager

  — The tax manager reports to the controller.

  — He or she supervises and directs staff who have responsibility for determining the organization's liability to various taxing authorities (income tax, licenses, sales tax, property tax, payroll tax, etc.).

  — The tax manager may also have responsibility for analyzing the effect of tax accounting alternatives.

  — This accountant studies laws and regulations to ensure compliance with and correct application of any changes to tax law.2
Example: Global tax manager sample job description

**Description:** Develops and implements systems to compile information for various federal, state, and local reports. Ensures timely and accurate filing of tax returns. Assesses tax implications surrounding pending mergers and acquisitions. Recommends ways to minimize corporate tax through use of tax laws and regulations. May administer international tax laws and regulations. Selects, develops, and evaluates personnel to ensure the efficient operation of the function.

**Responsibilities**

- Lead quarterly and annual U.S. international income tax provisions
- Handle foreign income tax compliance requirements
- Manage review and rollout of transfer pricing policies
- Lead U.S. international income tax compliance for all foreign entities
- Analyze international and local country tax planning around all aspects of CMC's business, including identification of issues, proper structuring of effective and tax-efficient strategies, and driving implementation of solutions.
- Advise on international tax aspects of business expansion
- Prepare relevant aspects of tax footnotes and disclosures for SEC filings
Corporation or company (continued)

- **Internal audit manager**
  - The internal audit manager is the director of staff who are responsible for sampling the organization’s internal control systems to ensure they are sufficient and reliable.
  - He or she ensures that company policies and procedures are followed and recommends changes where needed.
  - This accountant is responsible for developing policies and procedures to discover and prevent fraud and for identifying operational auditing areas.²

**Note:** In addition to having a CPA license, many companies will look for a Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) to lead their internal audit department. For accountants with a strong interest in internal audit, it may be worthwhile to research the benefits of the CIA designation.
Example: Internal audit manager

**Purpose of Role:** The Manager is responsible for coordinating and administering global internal audits of divisions, international country operations, manufacturing plants, and corporate functions, excluding information systems assignments. The Audit Manager is also responsible for occasionally leading the company’s most complex audit engagements. Leads the design and implementation of audit procedures throughout the organization and brings new and creative ideas to improve audit quality and efficiency of operations.

**Responsibilities**

- Manage and conduct financial and operational reviews to ensure adequate controls are in place, company policies are complied with, financial data is accurately reported, and processes/operations are efficiently and effectively performed
- Supervise, coach and mentor members of the audit team
- Develop and train staff related to audit techniques and the audit process
- Manage multiple deadlines across multiple teams to ensure timely and accurate audit reporting
- Participate in the risk assessment process to determine annual audit plan
- Direct department initiatives related to continual improvement of the audit process
- Stay informed of relevant accounting and business trends and issues
Assistant controller

• The assistant controller reports to the controller.

• This individual assists in supervising the day-to-day collection and interpretation of accounting data.

• He or she oversees statutory and management reporting functions, prepares detailed journal entries, and analyzes different accounts.

• This accountant may assist in preparing tax returns and financial statements.2
Corporation or company (continued)

Controller

• The controller generally serves as the chief accounting executive with responsibility for overseeing the work of the accounting department in collecting, summarizing, and interpreting financial data.

• The resulting financial information is used by management, creditors, investors, and relevant taxing authorities.

• The controller develops forecasts for proposed projects, measures performance against operating plans and standards, and interprets operational results for management.2
Example: Sample job description—Controller

**Description:** This role will collaborate with finance, commercial operations, sales, and legal teams to help them apply appropriate revenue recognition rules and contracting practices through consultation, review of commercial contracts and related transactions. This role is responsible for delivering effective commercial controllership through process and policy guidance, deal support, and accounting for commercial related transactions on the Diagnostic Imaging business.

**Responsibilities**

- Build strong relationships with the Finance and Accounting teams and have the necessary expertise to understand and resolve technical or operational issues and engage the relevant team as required.
- Review the financial analysis of balance sheet accounts prepared by our service providers to ensure U.S. GAAP compliance, integrity of account balances/financial reporting and effectiveness of business processes.
- Monitor and review the financial ledgers to ensure compliance with U.S. laws, U.S. GAAP/IFRS, tax codes, government regulations and filing requirements.
- Ensure appropriate sign off audited financial statements and appropriate management representations.
- Key local contact for auditor and tax authorities.
Example: Sample job description—Controller (continued)

Responsibilities (continued)

- Ensure adequate controls and compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley 404 requirements specific to revenue recognition and other related commercial transactions.
- Own the balance sheets for accounting related areas. Establish and own review processes to monitor the balance sheet ensuring timely identification of issues and resolution.
- Drive consistent and effective policies and procedures for quarterly close processes including account reconciliations, representation letter, and adjusting entries.
- Research and resolution of complex commercial finance and technical accounting issues including the application of new/proposed revenue recognition standards.
- Lead selected simplification initiatives within the commercial controllership team and drive consistency within commercial controllership processes and controls.
- Perform ad hoc special projects related to commercial controllership and broader controllership areas.
Corporation or company (continued)

Chief accounting officer

• Depending on the size of the organization, the controller may operate as the chief accounting officer.

• The chief accounting officer handles a wide variety of responsibilities, including accounting and management, finance, investor relations, and supervising departmental employees.

• He or she generally reports to the CFO.
Corporate or company (continued)

Chief financial officer

- The CFO advises the president or chief executive officer (CEO) of the organization on all tactical and strategic financial issues: reporting, stability, liquidity, growth, etc.

- This individual is responsible for directing and supervising the work of the controller, treasurer, and possibly the internal auditing manager.

- Other responsibilities can include maintaining relationships with shareholders, financial institutions, and investment bankers.

- The CFO often serves on the board of directors and/or the executive committee and in this capacity contributes to planning, developing, and implementing organization policies.²

Note: Usually the internal auditing manager reports to the Chief Audit Executive (CAE) who leads the internal auditing department and who generally reports to the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors. The CAE also has administrative reporting responsibilities to the CEO. For publicly traded companies in the U.S., this reporting relationship is required by law.
Governmental entity

General

• Responsibilities of CPAs in government encompass auditing, financial reporting, and management accounting, much like those in public accounting and industry.

• Government CPAs may also be responsible for evaluating the efficiency of entities at the federal, state, and local levels and advising decision makers there on optimal use of resources.²
Governmental entity (continued)

Federal government

• Examples of federal agencies that employ CPAs include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the IRS, the Department of the Treasury and the General Accounting Office (GAO).

• In these and other federal agencies, CPAs may:
  – Investigate white-collar crime
  – Manage financial statement audits
  – Perform research and analyze financial management issues
  – Testify before a legislative committee on results of an audit or the consequences of pending tax legislation
Governmental entity (continued)

**State and local government**

- At the state and local level, CPAs conduct financial, performance, or compliance audits on issues such as:
  - A school district's viability
  - The propriety of expenditures, such as prison construction
  - The effectiveness of benefits or social service programs, such as worker's compensation
  - The regulatory compliance of hazardous waste programs

2
Governmental entity (continued)

Governmental audits

- Performance audits
  - Performance auditing includes an independent evaluation of an organization's operation to determine how to make it work better, faster, and cheaper.
  - A performance audit may also determine whether management is fulfilling its promises to the taxpayers by effectively providing services that meet stated objectives.\(^2\)
Governmental entity (continued)

Example: Senior management auditor

**Description:** Under the general direction of the Chief, Internal Audit Bureau (IAB), the Senior Management Auditor (SMA) is responsible for managing and executing the day-to-day operation of the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) internal audit function. The SMA plans, organizes, directs, and evaluates the work of a professional internal audit staff conducting financial, operational, compliance and IT audits of CDTFA's operations. The SMA assists the IAB Chief in the administration and oversight of the CDTFA's internal audit and risk management functions. IAB assists the department in attaining/achieving their goals and objectives via a comprehensive internal auditing program.
Governmental entity (continued)

- **Financial audits**
  - Financial audits can include financial statement and financial-related audits or reviews.
  - A traditional financial statement audit focuses on examining and verifying information provided in an entity's financial statements.
  - The result may be an opinion on the "fairness" of the information presented in the financial statements or a determination that the entity has or has not adhered to specific federal and financial compliance requirements.
  - Financial audits may involve a review of the internal controls over financial operations.
  - A letter to management typically identifies any weaknesses and recommends corrective action.²

*Note:* The external auditors should also communicate material weaknesses to the audit committee of the board of directors or others charged with corporate governance in the organization.
Governmental entity (continued)

• Compliance audits

– Compliance audits are performed to determine whether the organization is meeting the terms of relevant laws, regulations and contractual grant or loan agreements.

– Where the organization deviates significantly from specific requirements, the compliance audit seeks corrective action.

– State compliance audits are concerned with specific state laws and regulations.

– Federal compliance audits focus on laws and regulations that are conditions of receiving federal money.2
Governmental entity (continued)

• Investigative audits

  – When allegations are made regarding improper activities by government employees or agencies, investigative audits are performed.

  – Most such allegations are received through a toll-free hotline for reporting government fraud and abuse.

  – Investigative audits may also be launched when auditors on other assignments become aware of inappropriate or suspicious activity that may fall under the Reporting of Improper Governmental Activities Act.2
Positions available

Governmental entity (continued)

Example: Sample job description—Tax examining technician IRS

As a Tax Examining Technician, you will resolve inquiries regarding tax account issues such as tax delinquency, adjust taxpayer accounts and provide information about general Service procedures. In this role, you will analyze and take appropriate actions as identified in the specific position for which you are applying. Your assignments may include communicating with taxpayers and their representatives regarding their accounts on notices issued.

AGS-5 LEVEL: You must have one (1) year of specialized experience at a level of difficulty and responsibility equivalent to the GS-4 grade level in the Federal service. Specialized experience for this position includes: researching and/or initiating actions on tax issues and all required information for correction of accounts and records; Interpreting taxpayer information; Verifying and/or adjusting taxpayer accounts; Securing payment of delinquent taxes; and/or determining financial, and uncollectible information. Other examples may include: Technical advisor, OJT coach, classroom instructor, or reviewer.

General requirements include U.S. citizenship, plus a four-year degree or legal or tax accounting experience that requires knowledge of federal tax laws and regulations. You could also be eligible for higher grades if you possess a JD or LLM.
Academic institution

Faculty positions may be:

- **Tenured**
  - A tenured professor has earned a lifetime appointment until retirement, unless terminated for due cause.
  - A new PhD generally starts as an assistant professor and can apply for tenure after 6–8 years.
  - Levels after assistant are associate professor (5–10 years) and finally, full professor.  

- **Non-tenured**
  - A non-tenured professor can be terminated at any time (or in accordance with the terms of any contract). Some positions are eligible for tenure, and some are not.
Academic institution (continued)

Example: Sample position description—Tenure track accounting professor

The College of Business at Loyola University New Orleans invites applications for the Joseph A. Butt, S.J., Professorship in Accounting. This is a tenure-track, open-rank Professor of Accounting position, beginning Fall 2021.

Faculty will be expected to conduct high quality research and teach undergraduate or graduate students. All areas of research and teaching will be considered. Applicants must have a Ph.D. in accounting or a related field. ABD candidates will be considered but must complete all doctoral degree requirements by the expected start date. Applicants must demonstrate research excellence/strong potential as indicated by refereed publications in top journals or works in progress and teaching excellence as evidenced by letters of reference and teaching evaluations.
Example: Sample position description—Lecturer accounting/staff instructor

The Department of Economics and Business at Southwestern University seeks applications from qualified candidates for the position of Staff Instructor in Accounting. This is a full-time, nine-month, non-tenure-track staff position with faculty rank starting the fall semester of 2020 (August 15, 2020). The position will involve teaching some of the following: financial accounting, managerial accounting, auditing, and intermediate accounting. The teaching load will be three courses per semester in addition to University service requirements which include advising students and participation on University committees.

A Master's degree is required. The candidate should also have at least 18 hours of graduate coursework in accounting and/or a current CPA license. Substantial industry experience in accounting will also be considered in candidate evaluation. Experience working with diverse populations is highly valued.
Positions available

Non-profit organization

Non-profit organizations rely on CPAs to determine whether the benefits and services they provide exceed revenues.

CPAs in non-profits may be on staff or serve in an advisory capacity. The availability of staff positions depends on the size of the organization.

Responsibilities include helping the organization resolve tax issues, establishing an internal control system, budgeting resources, and preparing financial data for fundraising.²
Positions available

Non-profit organization (continued)

Staff positions in non-profits

Staff positions are for individuals with 0–3 years of experience.

• **Financial accounting and reporting staff**
  
  – This accountant completes detailed work assignments in receivables, payables, payroll, property, general ledger, and/or financial statements.
  
  – Staff in this position generally report to a senior accountant.

• **Internal audit staff**
  
  – This accountant conducts compliance audits and tests internal controls and information systems.
  
  – Staff in this position generally report to a senior or manager-level person.²
Non-profit organization (continued)

Example: Accountant (Providence House)

Position Summary

The Accountant is primarily responsible for managing the daily accounting functions and accounting databases for recording, documenting and reporting all financial transactions. The successful candidate excels at prioritizing the needs of the organization and relating to individuals at all levels within the organization.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Provides accounting support for all departments to ensure consistency within the business framework of the organization.
- Responsible for the oversight of all daily, weekly and monthly accounting activities, including but not limited to accounts payable, accounts receivable, revenue recognition and deposits, credit card processing, purchase orders, invoices, payroll processing, and cash management.
- Oversee all accounts, ledgers, and reporting systems ensuring compliance with appropriate GAAP and Government Auditing Standards and regulatory requirements.
- Remain up-to-date on best practices in non-profit finance, business systems and internal control measures to increase operational efficiency and innovation and ensure compliance within the department.
Non-profit organization (continued)

Senior positions

Senior positions generally correspond to 3–6 years of experience.

• Financial accounting and reporting senior
  – This individual oversees work performed in receivables, payables, financial reporting and/or other areas of general accounting.
  – Additional responsibilities may include special reports and analyses involving financial data.\(^2\)
Non-profit organization (continued)

• **Internal audit senior**
  
  — This accountant manages testing of internal control and accounting information systems.
  
  — He or she often conducts statistical samples of document approval, special tests to uncover defalcations, and operational audits to recommend profit improvement.\(^2\)
Non-profit organization (continued)

Controller

• The controller generally serves as the chief accounting executive with responsibility for overseeing the work of the accounting department in collecting, summarizing, and interpreting financial data.

• The resulting financial information is used by management, creditors, investors, and relevant taxing authorities.

• As a top management team member, the controller assists in developing forecasts for proposed projects, measuring actual performance against operating plans and standards, and interpreting operational results for all levels of management.2
Non-profit organization (continued)

Chief financial officer

• This position often is given the title of vice president of finance.

• The CFO advises the organization's president on all financial issues: reporting, stability, liquidity, growth, etc.

• This individual is responsible for directing and supervising the work of the controller, treasurer, and possibly the internal auditing manager.

• The CFO may also have responsibility for maintaining relationships with financial institutions.²

Source: THEPALMER/iStockPhoto
Sole proprietor

Some accountants may choose to open their own private practice or otherwise be self-employed. Before an accountant chooses to go this route, there are some important things to consider.

- Tax obligations and procedures are different for self-employed individuals. The self-employed person will be responsible for the full portion of payroll taxes and must also submit estimated taxes to the government.

- If accountants plan to serve clients in a face-to-face situation, they will need an appropriate place to meet with clients, meaning that they may need to lease a building or other office space.
Sole proprietor (continued)

• Depending on the projected workload, it may be necessary to hire an assistant or other employees, which again creates complications from a tax perspective.

• As a self-employed person, the accountant will be responsible for all business-related expenses, including computer equipment, software, licensing fees, and continuing professional education.

• Accountants should also think about how they will market and advertise their services to maintain an adequate level of revenue throughout the year.
5 Salaries
Overview

Salaries in the field of accounting vary widely and depend on numerous factors, including but not limited to:

• Education level (i.e., associate's, bachelor's, master's or doctoral's degree)

• Professional experience

• Certifications (CPA, CMA, CIA, EA, etc.)

• Specialized expertise

• Type of employer (e.g., a large corporation may pay more than a small business)

• Geographic location
Average salaries

According to a recent article published by U.S. News, despite the wide variations in salaries, average salaries in the accounting field can be summarized as follows:

• The lowest 25th percentile earn an average of $55,070 annually.
• The highest 25th percentile earn an average of $92,910 annually.
• The median salary is $70,500.

**Key point:** Other bits of good news for accountants or those looking to enter the field are a projected growth rate of 6 percent through 2028 as indicated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and a low current unemployment rate of 1.8 percent.
Average salaries (continued)

Digging into the details a bit more, average salaries can further be broken down based on position and responsibility level, with the following positions reporting the following average salaries:

- Bookkeeper and clerical accounting positions: $42,110
- Financial analyst: $100,990
- Financial advisor: $121,770
- Financial manager: $146,830

**Note:** The large discrepancies in salary likely explain much of the results seen when evaluating "median" salaries. As companies will likely employ far more clerical and staff-level positions compared with analyst or manager-level positions, the median salaries in the field become skewed toward those positions with a larger number of workers.
Location matters

Accountants working in certain states and metropolitan areas can expect to earn higher salaries. According to U.S. News, the five states with the highest average salaries for accountants are:

1. District of Columbia (Washington, DC)
2. New York
3. New Jersey
4. Virginia
5. Connecticut

Highest-paying cities

The metropolitan areas reporting this highest salaries for accountants are:

1. New York, NY
2. Salinas, CA
3. Bridgeport, CT
4. Washington, DC
5. San Francisco, CA
### Salaries

#### Salary ranges based on experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>2018 Starting Salary Ranges—Taxes and Auditing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 year</td>
<td>$73,250 to $46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>$93,000 to $73,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>$111,500 to $93,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>$140,750 to $111,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Manager/Dir</td>
<td>$206,500 to $140,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The salary ranges are based on experience. For detailed tax and audit salary ranges, please refer to the chart above. Each range is divided into percentiles: 50th, 95th, and 99th. The chart illustrates the starting salary ranges for different levels of experience in the field of taxes and auditing.
Management salaries

2018 starting salary ranges—Corporate accounting

- CFO: 50th Percentile: $192,500, 95th Percentile: $497,000
- Controller: 50th Percentile: $115,000, 95th Percentile: $220,500
- Treasurer: 50th Percentile: $185,000, 95th Percentile: $483,500
Salaries

Academia salaries

2018-19 Nine-Month Full-Time Accounting Faculty Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Level</th>
<th>Mean/Average</th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>$179,870</td>
<td>$152,170</td>
<td>$156,000</td>
<td>$182,000</td>
</tr>
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<td>Associate Professor</td>
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<td>$118,400</td>
<td>$143,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>$91,490</td>
<td>$65,900</td>
<td>$80,700</td>
<td>$101,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In addition to the nine-month base salary, many 4-year institutions offer summer research support. The summer research support is quoted in ninths of the base salary and the typical new professor at a research intensive university receives 2/9 of their salary as additional summer research support money.

Reference: AACSB 2018-19 Staff Compensation & Demographics Survey Executive Summary: https://www.aacsb.edu/data/data-reports/survey-reports/staff-compensation-and-demographics
Salaries

More than just money

The adage "money isn't everything" holds true in the accounting field and may become even more important as millennials begin to advance through the ranks. According to the U.S. News article, the following were noted with regard to job satisfaction in the accounting field:

- Upward mobility, defined by opportunities to advance, is "high."
- Stress level, based on the work environment and job responsibilities, is "average."
- Flexibility, as it relates to work–life balance, is "above average."

Source: FatCamera/iStockPhoto
Resources


Resources


Resources


Resources


Thank you.