**Job description**

An external auditor is a member of an outside organisation contracted to audit systems and processes in another organisation to ensure the integrity of financial data. They are accountants who examine the financial statements of an organisation to ensure that a company’s annual accounts, its profit and loss account and its balance sheet present a true and fair view of the company’s financial activity. Independent auditors compile the company financial statements that are issued to shareholders, the Revenue, and the Companies Registration Office.

In addition, some companies also use internal auditors to review the financial reporting processes and internal accounting controls to assure that the company’s systems are appropriately designed and operating effectively.

**Typical employers**

- Professional accountancy firms including the ‘big 4’ (KPMG, Ernst & Young, Deloitte and PricewaterhouseCoopers)
- Midsized and smaller firms
- Commercial organisations and industry
- Government departments and regulatory bodies.

**Work activities**

- Researching, preparing, analysing, and compiling financial data for various clients.
- Obtaining an understanding of the company’s internal controls and applying auditing procedures such as inspecting the company’s books and records, observation, inquiries, and confirmations.
- Interacting with different people at all levels in order to fully understand the client’s business.

**Work conditions**

**Travel:** external auditors spend much of their time on site with clients.

**Working hours:** mainly Monday to Friday office hours but can also involve long hours to meet particular deadlines.

**Location:** mainly in towns or cities throughout the country.

**Opportunities for self-employment:** possible.

**Career development**

An accounting qualification provides a foundation for a variety of roles and opportunities for progression are plentiful and varied but depend very much on the area of work.

In public practice, progression can be quite structured so that an accountant may become a manager within two to three years of qualifying, then on to senior manager before progressing to be a partner. However competition at the higher levels is keen.

In other settings progression varies and will depend on individual aspirations and abilities.

Opportunities also exist for self-employment.

**Salaries**

Salaries vary considerably depending on sector, employer, location, and size of organisation/practice.

Republic of Ireland: Year one students in public practice earn as little as €19,000, those in other sectors such as financial services can earn salaries in excess of €30,000. Partners in public practice can earn in excess of €140,000.

For more information and the Northern Ireland salaries visit the Brightwater 2011 Salary Survey.

(continued overleaf)
Entry requirements and training
Open to non-graduates and graduates of all disciplines but some degrees gain exemptions from various professional examinations. As these are constantly changing please refer directly to professional bodies for their current list of exemptions.

Other relevant degree subjects
• Accounting
• Finance
• Business
• Mathematics
• Law
• Management.

Postgraduate study
A pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not required but additional exemptions can be gained depending on the programme of study.

Training
Training varies depending on which professional body and method of entry chosen and lasts approximately 3 years for those with exemptions based on postgraduate study to over 5 years for those entering with a ‘leaving certificate’ or equivalent. Flexible learning paths, including distance learning are offered by some bodies while others require more structured routes including the completion of a training contract and a minimum number of year’s relevant supervised training.

The main professional bodies for those wishing to pursue a career as an Auditor are:
• Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
• Chartered Accountants Ireland
• Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
• Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA)
• Institute of Incorporated Public Accountants (IIPA).

Generous study leave is often made available although this depends on the employer.

Chartered Accountants Ireland have introduced a new entry route known as the Elevation Programme, for experienced graduates wishing to become chartered accountants. This route, unlike others with Chartered Accountants Ireland, does not require students being obliged to enter a training contract.

Tips for applications
Some firms confine their recruitment activities to autumn presentations (sometimes called ‘milk rounds’). Apply for these training positions in your final year and bear in mind that applications close as early as October. Many firms offer sponsorship to successful applicants who wish to pursue a masters in accounting.

Apply for a summer internship with an accounting firm or gain other relevant paid or voluntary work experience. Many recruiters use internships as part of their selection process and often offer jobs to suitable students without having to go through the normal application process.

Attend any on-campus presentations by employers.
Understand the difference between financial and management accounting and be aware of their associated professional bodies.

Skills and qualities

- Attention to detail and the ability to work logically, consistently and accurately.
- Excellent numeracy skills combined with an inquiring, analytical mind.
- Good working knowledge of accounting information, while keeping up to date with changing financial rules and regulations.
- Ability to discuss financial issues with both fellow professionals and those with little or no financial background.
- Self-motivation and excellent time and project management skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- The drive and motivation to pass exams while working full full-time.