

Associate General Accountant designation now available to Wits students and alumni

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Exciting new prospects for those who studied BCom Accounting at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) after 2015. The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) has accredited this degree for admission into its mid-tier Associate General Accountants [AGAs(SA)] designation.



Recently, the Department of Home Affairs ended public commentary on its draft national Critical Skills List. This list, which includes several common accountancy roles, is great news for those who studied a BCom Accounting at WITS. Not only does this mean that there are a variety of jobs available in this sector, but the news of Saica's recent AGA(SA) accreditation of this degree has the potential to make Wits Graduates even more employable.

When it comes to addressing South Africa's scarce-skills shortage, Saica prides itself on accrediting programmes which enable students access to Saica's membership via various qualification routes. Chantyl Mulder, Saica's executive director: learning, development and national imperatives, explains why:

"There is global agreement that membership of a professional body adds to your employability because it shows that you have qualified through a trusted, well-regulated, rigorous education and assessment process and are serious about your career and professional development. Now, because Wits has gained AGA accreditation for its BCom Accounting degree, those who studied this degree have the chance to align their career trajectory with one of the world's leading accounting institutes; Saica."

The accreditation is effective to all students who enrolled for a Wits' BCom Accounting programme from January 2015 or later. This means that both Wits alumni and current students that qualify can become AGAs(SA) if they have successfully completed a Saica training contract or have four years' of relevant work experience and successfully completed Saica's Training Equivalence Assessment.

What is an AGA(SA)?

The primary role of an AGA(SA) is to enhance, drive and measure organisational value thanks to their broad, future-focused, multi-disciplinary approach to driving operational performance. As an associate member of Saica, they are required to comply with the Saica Code of Professional Conduct and act ethically as well as undertake ongoing and relevant learning activities that contribute towards their ongoing professional competence. This is a win for both the associate member and the organisations they serve.

What does the accreditation mean for Wits?

"To gain Saica accreditation, higher education providers must undergo a rigorous and extensive process to ensure that their programme has the necessary resources in place to deliver a high quality programme leading to an AGA(SA) designation. These quality assurance processes are undertaken in addition to the formal regulatory accreditation requirements of the DHET, CHE and SAQA which need to be in place before getting the Saica stamp of approval. Having undergone the formal accreditation process, we are confident that Wits' BCom Accounting degree is backed by the necessary resources to meet Saica's standards. On behalf of the institution, we congratulate the Wits team on this achievement," explains Mulder.

Professor Nirupa Padia, head of the school of accountancy at Wits adds that "Wits is very excited about this accreditation and the alignment of the degree with Saica's high standards. This accreditation offers a new career path for BCom Accounting graduates in the profession. It also offers students who enter the CA (Chartered Accountant) programme but ultimately do not end up qualifying as CAs(SA), an alternative option to become an AGA(SA).

The content of the BCom Accounting and CA programme are almost identical in terms of quality and competency but within the different curriculums and competency frameworks. The key difference between the programmes is the number of majors required being two majors for the BCom Accounting programme, compared to four majors for the CA programme. AGAs(SA) fulfil important statutory and management roles in the profession and Wits prides itself on the quality of its BCom Accounting programme and the School's contribution to this field of the profession."

Anyone wishing to query whether they can qualify for Saica's AGA(SA) designation on the back of the successful completion of this degree can contact Adri Kleinhans at adrik@saica.co.za or visit www.saica.org.za for further details.

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