Enabling Competency Review Guidance for Mentors, Program Leaders, and Program Managers
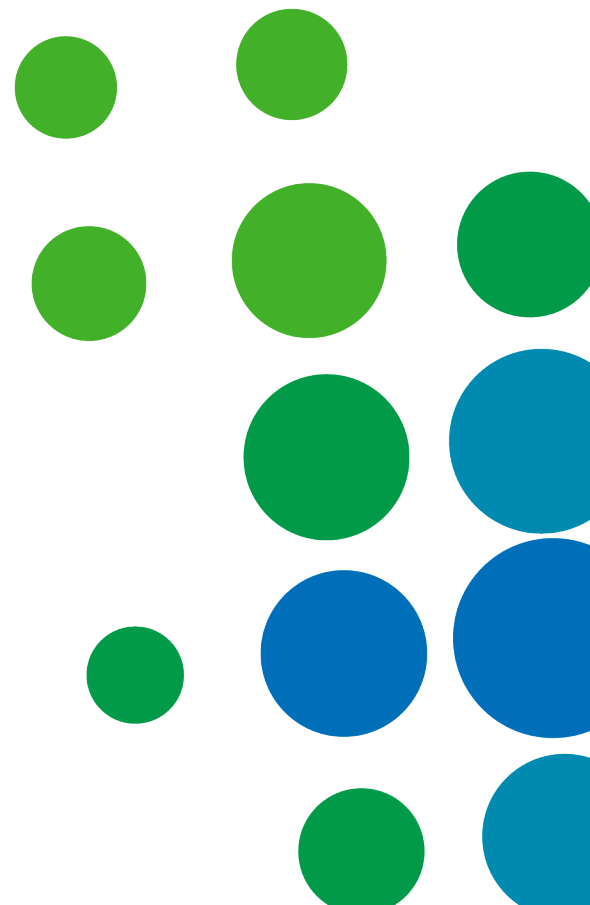
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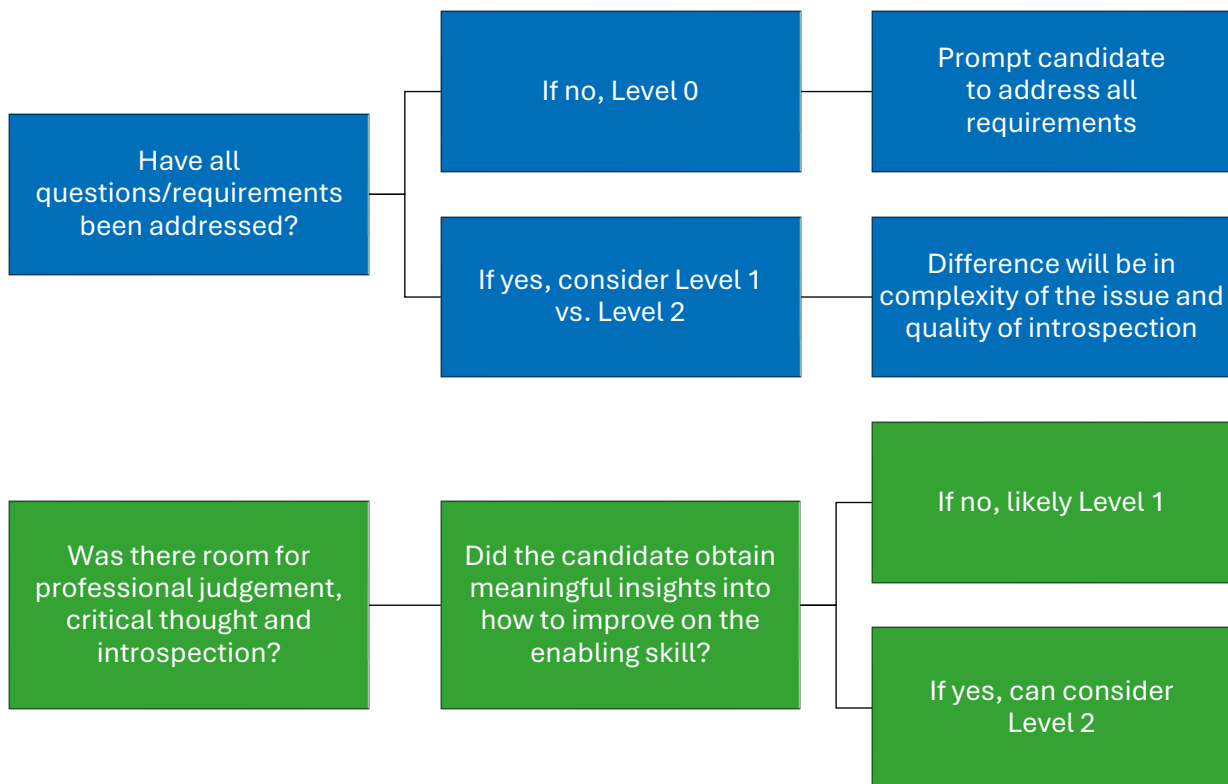# Contents

Executive summary

This document aims to provide mentors, program managers, and program leaders with additional information to support the review of candidate enabling competencies, ensuring that responses in all five enabling competencies support Level 2 proficiency before a candidate has completed their PPR program.

Enabling competencies should be discussed on a regular basis to determine if the candidate has a strong example to support Level 2 proficiency. Please note that enabling competency questions in PERT only need to be completed once the candidate is at a Level 2 proficiency. Level 0 and Level 1 examples can be discussed as candidates gain the relevant experience, but do not have to be documented in PERT.

Review strategy

	If no, Level 0	Prompt candidate to address all requirements
Have all questions/requirements been addressed?		
	If yes, consider Level 1 vs. Level 2	Difference will be in complexity of the issue and quality of introspection

		If no, likely Level 1
Was there room for professional judgement, critical thought and introspection?	Did the candidate obtain meaningful insights into how to improve on the enabling skill?	
		If yes, can consider Level 2

Common issues – all competencies

Issue	Feedback
Not all requirements are addressed in part a), b), or c).	Please address each question and the bulleted list within a), b) and c) to provide a fulsome discussion of this competency.
Only one alternative is provided in part b).	A lack of viable alternatives indicates there isn't sufficient complexity to this example to support Level 2 proficiency. Ask the candidate to provide an example where they had to evaluate multiple options or courses of action in order to conclude on the optimal solution/course of action.
Candidate identifies no room for improvement in part c).	As professionals, it's important to be focused on continuous improvement – while they may not change the ultimate outcome/solution/course of action, there are likely areas to improve how they navigated different aspects of the situation.
Candidate discussion in part c) focuses on the technical issue rather than the enabling competency.	Ask the candidate to think about the enabling skill more broadly, rather than how they would approach this specific issue differently if faced with it again. For example, what did they learn about this enabling skill that could apply to any situation in the future, regardless of the issue/subject matter?
Candidate only identifies external factors they would change in part c).	Ask the candidate to consider the factors within their control that could be improved upon the next time they are faced with a similar situation.
Example provided is hypothetical, from past employment, education, or volunteer experience.	Request candidate provides an example from their current role.
General discussion provided, rather than a specific example.	In order to evaluate this competency in sufficient depth, candidates will need to provide a specific example which allows them to explore each of the requirements in a), b). and c).

Enabling Competency 1 - Professional and Ethical Behaviour

Competency overview

CPAs may come across situations where demonstrating ethical and professional behaviours is not simple or straightforward. These situations may create a tension between one's professional values and achieving a particular objective at work, such as feeling pressured to:

- relax a policy or take a shortcut
- omit relevant information or present information in a particular light to meet someone's expectations
- not report time or costs on a project
- disclose confidential information

The key to this competency is that there must be a values conflict, which generally takes the form of internal and/or external pressure to violate one or more of the profession's values.

Acting ethically or professionally without this ethical tension is not sufficient to meet the requirements of this competency.

Competency defined

a) *CPAs can face complex situations where they may be in conflict with their professional values. These values (as defined in your provincial Code/Rules of Professional Conduct) are integrity, due care, objectivity, independence, professional competence, and confidentiality.*

   Describe a time where you encountered a situation that challenged one of your professional values identifying:
   - *which value was in conflict;*
   - *what was at stake for all involved, including yourself; and,*
   - *what you did.*

b) *How did you choose this course of action and what alternatives did you consider? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? What information did you need to gather and/or who did you seek guidance from?*

c) *What impacts did your course of action have on all involved, including yourself? If confronted with a similar situation in the future, what would make it easier for you to act and what you would do differently?*

Common review issues

Issue	Feedback
Candidates do not address what the professional value in conflict was or they are addressing a concept outside the professional values in part a).	Refer candidates to the CPA values as defined in the Rules of Professional Conduct: integrity, due care, objectivity, independence, professional competency and confidentiality.
Candidate does not demonstrate how their professional values are conflicted in part a).	Ask the candidate to describe what was pressuring them to act against their professional value(s).
Candidate does not provide multiple viable alternatives in part b).	Explain that when a candidate's professional values are being challenged, there are always alternatives to weigh. Ask exploratory questions regarding the example provided to determine if this analysis took place and the candidate just needs to articulate. If viable alternatives do not exist, then the example does not likely represent a true values conflict, and a new example should be requested.
Candidate identifies no room for improvement in part c), or nothing they would do differently in the future.	As professionals, it's important to be focused on continuous improvement – while they may not change the ultimate outcome/solution/course of action, there are likely things to improve with regards to how different aspects of this situation were navigated.
Candidate does not reflect on what would make it easier to act if confronted with a similar situation in the future in part c).	Ask the candidate to discuss some insights they gained about how to navigate a situation that challenges their professional values: what did they learn from this experience that will help them better navigate the next values conflict they face?

Enabling Competency 2 - Solving Problems and Adding Value

Competency overview

CPAs are relied upon as problem solvers and often lend their expertise to improve different functions at work. Opportunities to add value can come in many forms, such as:

- adapting one's work to new standards or processes
- performing an established process or task with new technology
- optimizing efficiency
- correcting an error
- enhancing a service offering

The focus of this competency is on understanding and applying the steps in the problem-solving process to add value to the organization.

Competency defined

a) *Describe a time when you attempted to improve a process, product or service in the workplace, including the problem you were trying to solve. What challenges did you encounter and what actions did you take to address them? Describe the CPA value that was most applicable to this situation.*

b) *How did you choose this course of action and what alternatives did you consider? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? How did you apply existing knowledge in new or different ways? What were the risks and limitations of your chosen course of action and how did you address them?*

c) *What did you learn from this experience about solving problems? How can you apply these learnings in the future?*

Common review issues

Issue	Feedback
Candidate indicates they chose not to solve the problem or referred it to others to solve in part a).	Explain to candidates that they need to provide an example where they have done the work to analyze different ways to solve the problem and weigh the pros and cons of each alternative. This demonstrates that they've developed the skill of exploring different alternatives before ultimately recommending the solution.
Candidate indicates only one viable option in addition to 'do nothing/status quo' in part b).	To have sufficient depth and complexity to support Level 2 proficiency in problem solving, there must be multiple viable alternatives for candidates to identify and evaluate. Alternatives can be choices between multiple solutions, or different ways to approach solving the problem. The key is to ensure all alternatives have been identified, then evaluate each one before ultimately recommending a solution.
Candidate misses the last two questions in part b): **"How did you apply existing knowledge in new or different ways?" and** **"What were the risks and limitations of your chosen course of action and how did you address them?"**	Often, this work has been done as part of their analysis but not articulated. Consider asking exploratory questions about the example provided to help develop a robust response.
Candidate focuses on the technical problem they encountered in part c).	Prompt the candidate to reflect on what they learned about the problem-solving process and how they can apply what they learned to the way they approach problems in the future.

Enabling Competency 3 - Communicating

Competency overview

CPAs are often required to translate complex concepts for individuals with diverse backgrounds. Communicating clearly and concisely takes practice and requires an understanding of the needs of the other party.

Opportunities to adapt communication to better meet the needs of the audience could include:

- explaining financial information to a non-financial user
- presenting information using visual aids rather than text
- using multiple methods of communication to relay a message
- altering communication tactics, like using available technology in order to better explain the concept

Competency defined

a) *Describe a time when you adapted your oral or written communication to meet the needs of a specific audience. What actions did you take? Describe the CPA value that was most applicable to this situation.*

b) *How did you choose this course of action and what alternatives did you consider? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? What would have been the result had you not taken these steps?*

c) *What did you learn from this experience about communicating? How can you apply these learnings in the future?*

Common review issues

Issue	Feedback
Candidate provides a general discussion of adapting communication without a specific example in part a).	Explain to the candidate that they need to provide a step-by-step example where they've had to do this work in order to demonstrate they've developed the skills of identifying when and how to adapt communication for a specific audience.
Candidate's discussion of communication skills and techniques in part a) is limited to very general terminology such as 'I discussed' or 'I listened' without discussing how they adapted their communication.	Instead of using general terminology such as 'I discussed', ask the candidate to consider how they led this discussion: • What did the candidate do to prepare how they would deliver the information/message? • What information did they obtain from the audience, both verbal and non-verbal? • How did they adapt their communication in response? • How did they know whether their methods were effective?
Candidate focuses only on changing the mode of communication (email, phone, etc.) as opposed to the communication strategies/ techniques used to meet the needs of the audience in part a).	Ask the candidate to consider how they changed their communication when choosing to meet in person vs. over email, and what strategies they were able to employ to better meet the needs of the audience/objectives of the communication.
Candidate indicates their alternative considered was to not communicate at all in part b).	Choosing not to communicate important and/or difficult information is not a viable alternative. Ask the candidate to consider some alternative ways to communicate in this situation. What are the pros and cons of these alternatives?
Candidate works in isolation from their audience in the example provided.	Ask the candidate to consider how they could engage their audience to determine how to best adapt their communication and/or determine whether the adaptation was successful.

Enabling Competency 4 - Managing Self

Competency overview

This competency focuses on uncomfortable situations where a candidate did not perform in line with the expectations of a CPA, such as:

- work was poor quality
- missed deadlines
- analysis missed important information that impacted decision making
- taking on more work than could reasonably be completed

The ability to identify, prevent, and/or manage one's own performance issues is a key characteristic of a professional, and this competency provides a very tangible way to support candidate growth as they enter the profession.

Competency defined

a) *Describe a time when your performance did not fully meet your expectations. What challenges did you encounter and what actions did you take to address them? Describe the CPA value that was most applicable to this situation.*

b) *When you reflect on your course of action, what alternatives could you have considered? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? Who could you have consulted with or sought guidance from?*

c) *Having carried out these actions, what would you do differently next time? What skills do you need to develop to help you meet your expectations going forward in your career? How are you planning to gain them?*

Common review issues

Issue	Feedback
Candidate does not discuss the challenges that led to the performance issue in part a).	Prompt the candidate to consider what factors prevented optimal performance. Common examples of performance challenges might be: • specific actions/inactions of the candidate • not recognizing when to ask for help • not recognizing they did not possess the skills to complete the task • poor time management • external factors
Candidate does not address what actions they took to address the challenge(s) they experienced in part a).	Prompt the candidate to explore their decision-making process when determining how to address the performance issue.
The candidate focuses on external changes in part c), rather than how they can better manage their own performance in the future.	Even when external factors contribute to a performance issue, it's important to recognize what was within the candidate's control. Ask the candidate to consider how they could have reacted to the external factor differently, or how they might consider external factors when planning and executing future work to better manage the outcome.

Enabling Competency 5 - Collaborating and Leading

Competency overview

CPAs are continually required to work as part of a team and are often required to act as leaders in their workplace. Working towards a common goal with others can be complex when one must:

- integrate a new team member or themselves into a new team
- follow or create a new process
- allocate work or resources
- navigate different opinions or personalities
- achieve consensus when there are many potential solutions
- manage competing deadlines or priorities

Note: this competency has two options available – the first, 5.1, is usually better suited to candidates who are in positions of leadership either through their role/title or because they have been formally designated as a leader for a discrete project. Candidates who find leadership opportunities from within a team rather than formally leading a team should respond to question 5.2.

Competency defined

5.1 Plans and effectively manages teams and projects

a) *Describe a time when you managed a team or project. What did you do to plan and execute the assignment effectively? Describe the CPA value that was most applicable to this situation.*

b) *How did you choose this course of action and what alternatives did you consider? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? How did you promote and gain support for your ideas?*

c) *What did you learn from this experience about leadership? How can you apply these learnings in the future?*

5.2 Collaborates effectively as a team member

a) *Describe a time when, as a member of a team, you worked with others to achieve a particular objective. What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them? Describe the CPA value that was most applicable to this situation.*

b) *How did you choose this course of action and what alternatives did you consider? What were the pros and cons of each alternative? Who did you consult with or seek guidance from?*

c) *What did you learn from this experience about yourself and others? How can you apply these learnings in the future?*

Common review issues

Issue	Feedback
Candidate answers question 5.1 but addresses project management without any reference to teamwork.	For the candidate to fully address the requirements of this competency, there must be a teamwork or resource management component – the focus of this competency is on working with others to achieve an objective.
For question 5.1, candidate focuses on planning the assignment, or executing the assignment, when the competency requires them to address both.	Ask the candidate to discuss the steps they took to both plan and execute the assignment.
In question 5.2, the candidate focuses on challenges they faced as an individual rather than challenges faced by the team.	Encourage the candidate to consider what challenges were encountered that may have prevented the team from meeting the shared goal. Some examples could be: • personality differences • competing priorities Next, ask the candidate to consider the leadership and collaboration skills that the candidate and/or others displayed (or ought to have displayed) to resolve this issue.
In question 5.2, the candidate does not consider alternatives for how to resolve the challenge(s) preventing the team from achieving the shared objective.	It's important to consider all alternatives before acting on the chosen solution. Prompt the candidate to consider the following: what are some alternatives to consider when determining how to resolve teamwork issues on a current/future project? What group processes could have been implemented to address the team challenge in this example?