

SLAuS 300 : Planning an Audit of Financial Statement

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Financial Control & Audit
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PLANNING AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SLAuS 300

Introduction

The purpose of this Sri Lanka Auditing Standard (SLAuS) is to establish standards and provide guidance on the considerations and activities applicable to planning an audit of financial statements.

The auditor should plan the audit so that the engagement will be performed in an effective manner.

Planning an audit involves,

- Establishing the overall audit strategy for the engagement
- Developing an audit plan, in order to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level.

Advantages of Adequate planning

1. Helps to ensure that appropriate attention is devoted to important areas of the audit
2. Helps to ensure that potential problems are identified and resolved on a timely basis
3. Helps to ensure that the audit engagement is properly organized and managed in order to be performed in an effective and efficient manner.

Adequate planning also,

4. Assists in the proper assignment of work to engagement team members
5. Facilitates the direction and supervision of engagement team members and the review of their work
6. Assists, where applicable, in coordination of work done by auditors of components and experts.

The nature and extent of planning activities will vary according to the,

- i. size and complexity of the entity
- ii. the auditor's previous experience with the entity
- iii. Changes in circumstances that occur during the audit engagement.

- Planning is not a discrete phase of an audit, but rather a continual and iterative process that often begins shortly after (or in connection with) the completion of the previous audit and continues until the completion of the current audit engagement.
- However, in planning an audit, the auditor considers the timing of certain planning activities and audit procedures that need to be completed prior to the performance of further audit procedures.

For example, the auditor plans the discussion among engagement team members, the analytical procedures to be applied as risk assessment procedures, the obtaining of a general understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the entity and how the entity is complying with that framework, the determination of materiality, the involvement of experts and the performance of other risk assessment procedures prior to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement and performing further audit procedures at the assertion level for classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures that are responsive to those risks.

Preliminary Engagement Activities

The auditor should perform the following activities at the beginning of the current audit engagement:

- Perform procedures regarding the continuance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement
- Evaluate compliance with ethical requirements, including independence.
- Establish an understanding of the terms of the engagement

The auditor's consideration of client continuance and ethical requirements, including independence, occurs throughout the performance of the audit engagement as conditions and changes in circumstances occur.

However, the auditor's initial procedures on both client continuance and evaluation of ethical requirements (including independence) are performed prior to performing other significant activities for the current audit engagement. For continuing audit engagements, such initial procedures often occur shortly after (or in connection with) the completion of the previous audit.

The purpose of performing these preliminary engagement activities

“Help ensure that the auditor has considered any events or circumstances that may adversely affect the auditor’s ability to plan and perform the audit engagement to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level.”

Performing these preliminary engagement activities helps to ensure that the auditor plans an audit engagement for which:

- The auditor maintains the necessary independence and ability to perform the engagement.
- There are no issues with management integrity that may affect the auditor’s willingness to continue the engagement.
- There is no misunderstanding with the client as to the terms of the engagement.

Planning Activities

The Overall Audit Strategy

- The auditor should establish the overall audit strategy for the audit.
- The overall audit strategy sets the scope, timing and direction of the audit, and guides the development of the more detailed audit plan.

The establishment of the overall audit strategy involves:

- (a) Determining the characteristics of the engagement that define its scope, such as the financial reporting framework used, industry-specific reporting requirements and the locations of the components of the entity
- (b) Ascertaining the reporting objectives of the engagement to plan the timing of the audit and the nature of the communications required, such as deadlines for interim and final reporting, and key dates for expected communications with management and those charged with governance
- (c) Considering the important factors that will determine the focus of the engagement team’s efforts, such as,
 - determination of appropriate materiality levels
 - preliminary identification of areas where there may be higher risks of material misstatement
 - preliminary identification of material components and account balances

- evaluation of whether the auditor may plan to obtain evidence regarding the effectiveness of internal control
- identification of recent significant entity-specific, industry, financial reporting or other relevant developments.

In developing the overall audit strategy, the auditor also considers,

- the results of preliminary engagement activities and,
- where practicable, experience gained on other engagements performed for the entity.

The process of developing the overall audit strategy helps the auditor to ascertain the nature, timing and extent of resources necessary to perform the engagement.

The overall audit strategy sets out clearly:

- (a) The resources to deploy for specific audit areas, such as the use of appropriately experienced team members for high risk areas or the involvement of experts on complex matters
- (b) The amount of resources to allocate to specific audit areas, such as the number of team members assigned to observe the inventory count at material locations, the extent of review of other auditors' work in the case of group audits, or the audit budget in hours to allocate to high risk areas
- (c) When these resources are deployed, such as whether at an interim audit stage or at key cut-off dates
- (d) How such resources are managed, directed and supervised, such as when team briefing and debriefing meetings are expected to be held, how engagement partner and manager reviews are expected to take place (for example, on-site or off-site), and whether to complete engagement quality control reviews.

Once the overall audit strategy has been established, the auditor is able to start the development of a more detailed audit plan to address the various matters identified in the overall audit strategy, taking into account the need to achieve the audit objectives through the efficient use of the auditor's resources.

Although the auditor ordinarily establishes the overall audit strategy before developing the detailed audit plan, the two planning activities are not necessarily discrete or sequential processes but are closely inter-related since changes in one may result in consequential changes to the other.

In audits of small entities, the entire audit may be conducted by a very small audit team. Many audits of small entities involve the audit engagement partner (who may be a sole practitioner) working with one engagement team member (or without any engagement team members). With a smaller team, coordination and communication between team members are easier.

Establishing the overall audit strategy for the audit of a small entity need not be a complex or time-consuming exercise; it varies according to the size of the entity and the complexity of the audit. For example, a brief memorandum prepared at the completion of the previous audit, based on a review of the working papers and highlighting issues identified in the audit just completed, updated and changed in the current period based on discussions with the owner-manager, can serve as the basis for planning the current audit engagement.

The Audit Plan

The auditor should develop an audit plan for the audit in order to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level.

The audit plan is more detailed than the overall audit strategy and includes the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures to be performed by engagement team members in order to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to reduce audit risk to an acceptably low level.

Documentation of the audit plan also serves as a record of the proper planning and performance of the audit procedures that can be reviewed and approved prior to the performance of further audit procedures.

The audit plan includes:

- A description of the nature, timing and extent of planned risk assessment procedures sufficient to assess the risks of material misstatement.

- A description of the nature, timing and extent of planned further audit procedures at the assertion level for each material class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure.

The plan for further audit procedures reflects the auditor's decision whether to test the operating effectiveness of controls, and the nature, timing and extent of planned substantive procedures; and

- Such other audit procedures required to be carried out for the engagement in order to comply with SLAuSs (for example, seeking direct communication with the entity's lawyers).

Planning for these audit procedures takes place over the course of the audit as the audit plan for the engagement develops. For example, planning of the auditor's risk assessment procedures ordinarily occurs early in the audit process. However, planning of the nature, timing and extent of specific further audit procedures depends on the outcome of those risk assessment procedures.

In addition, the auditor may begin the execution of further audit procedures for some classes of transactions, account balances and disclosures before completing the more detailed audit plan of all remaining further audit procedures.

Changes to Planning Decisions during the Course of the Audit

The overall audit strategy and the audit plan should be updated and changed as necessary during the course of the audit.

Planning an audit is a continual and iterative process throughout the audit engagement. As a result of unexpected events, changes in conditions, or the audit evidence obtained from the results of audit procedures, the auditor may need to modify the overall audit strategy and audit plan, and thereby the resulting planned nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures.

Information may come to the auditor's attention that differs significantly from the information available when the auditor planned the audit procedures. For example, the auditor may obtain audit evidence through the performance of substantive procedures that contradicts the audit evidence obtained with respect to the testing of the operating

effectiveness of controls. In such circumstances, the auditor re-evaluates the planned audit procedures, based on the revised consideration of assessed risks at the assertion level for all or some of the classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures.

Direction, Supervision and Review

The auditor should plan the nature, timing and extent of direction and supervision of engagement team members and review of their work

The nature, timing and extent of the direction and supervision of engagement team members and review of their work vary depending on many factors, including

- the size and complexity of the entity
- the area of audit
- the risks of material misstatement,
- the capabilities and competence of personnel performing the audit work

The auditor plans the nature, timing and extent of direction and supervision of engagement team members based on the assessed risk of material misstatement. As the assessed risk of material misstatement increases, for the area of audit risk, the auditor ordinarily increases the extent and timeliness of direction and supervision of engagement team members and performs a more detailed review of their work. Similarly, the auditor plans the nature, timing and extent of review of the engagement team's work based on the capabilities and competence of the individual team members performing the audit work.

Documentation

1. The auditor should document the overall audit strategy and the audit plan, including any significant changes made during the audit engagement.
2. The auditor's documentation of the overall audit strategy records the key decisions considered necessary to properly plan the audit and to communicate significant matters to the engagement team. For example, the auditor may summarize the overall audit strategy in the form of a memorandum that contains key decisions regarding the overall scope, timing and conduct of the audit.

The auditor's documentation of the audit plan is sufficient to demonstrate the planned nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures, and further audit procedures at the assertion level for each material class of transaction, account balance, and disclosure in response to the assessed risks.

The auditor may use standard audit programs or audit completion checklists. However, when such standard programs or checklists are used, the auditor appropriately tailors them to reflect the particular engagement circumstances.

The auditor's documentation of any significant changes to the originally planned overall audit strategy and to the detailed audit plan includes the

- reasons for the significant changes and,
- the auditor's response to the events, conditions, or results of audit procedures that resulted in such changes.

For example, the auditor may significantly change the planned overall audit strategy and the audit plan as a result of a material business combination or the identification of a material misstatement of the financial statements. A record of the significant changes to the overall audit strategy and the audit plan, and resulting changes to the planned nature, timing and extent of audit procedures, explains the overall strategy and audit plan finally adopted for the audit and demonstrates the appropriate response to significant changes occurring during the audit.

The form and extent of documentation depend on such matters as,

- the size and complexity of the entity
- materiality
- the extent of other documentation
- the circumstances of the specific audit engagement.

Communications with Those Charged with Governance and Management

The auditor may discuss elements of planning with those charged with governance and the entity's management. These discussions may be a part of overall communications required to be made to those charged with governance of the entity or may be made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the audit.

- Discussions with those charged with governance ordinarily include the overall audit strategy and timing of the audit, including any limitations thereon, or any additional requirements.
- Discussions with management often occur to facilitate the conduct and management of the audit engagement (for example, to coordinate some of the planned audit procedures with the work of the entity's personnel).

- Although these discussions often occur, the overall audit strategy and the audit plan remain the auditor's responsibility. When discussions of matters included in the overall audit strategy or audit plan occur, care is required in order to not compromise the effectiveness of the audit. For example, the auditor considers whether discussing the nature and timing of detailed audit procedures with management compromises the effectiveness of the audit by making the audit procedures too predictable.

Additional Considerations in Initial Audit Engagements

The auditor should perform the following activities prior to starting an initial audit:

- (a) Perform procedures regarding the acceptance of the client relationship and the specific audit engagement
- (b) Communicate with the previous auditor, where there has been a change of auditors, in compliance with relevant ethical requirements.

The purpose and objective of planning the audit are the same whether the audit is an initial or recurring engagement. However, for an initial audit, the auditor may need to expand the planning activities because the auditor does not ordinarily have the previous experience with the entity that is considered when planning recurring engagements.

For **initial audits, additional matters** the auditor may consider in developing the overall audit strategy and audit plan include the following:

- Unless prohibited by law or regulation, arrangements to be made with the previous auditor, for example, to review the previous auditor's working papers.
- Any major issues (including the application of accounting principles or of auditing and reporting standards) discussed with management in connection with the initial selection as auditors, the communication of these matters to those charged with governance and how these matters affect the overall audit strategy and audit plan.
- The planned audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding opening balances
- The assignment of firm personnel with appropriate levels of capabilities and competence to respond to anticipated significant risks.
- Other procedures required by the firm's system of quality control for initial audit engagements (for example, the firm's system of quality control may require the involvement of another partner or senior individual to review the overall audit strategy prior to commencing significant audit procedures or to review reports prior to their issuance).