

# NEW ACCOUNTANT<sup>®</sup>

SINCE 1985

## Global Opportunities for CPAs

How to turn your CPA credential into an international opportunity



**BECKER<sup>®</sup>**  
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

# Global Opportunities for CPAs

Mapping your career on a global scale. How to turn your CPA credential into an international opportunity. By Steven Chou - Director, International Business Operations, Becker Professional Education

**I**f anyone asks you where you think your CPA credential will take you, give them the two-word answer. The world. It's short and sweet. And it's literally true. With global business a fact of life and the initials CPA behind your name, there's every chance in the world you'll have an opportunity for international experience at some point in your career.

## CPAs. They're everywhere.

Virtually every corporation and accounting firm with a global presence needs CPAs with international perspective. For audit and tax work alone, there's an extraordinary demand for CPAs to work internationally in traditional roles. But even the briefest scan of the Big Four accounting firms' websites provides ample evidence that global assignments for CPAs can be far-flung and more intriguing than many might ever imagine.

Take for example: Investigating fraud in Latin America. Tracking money laundering in Indonesia. Doing tax work in Brazil. Developing a phone company business model in Australia. Training Indian accountants to use US GAAP. Leading a global audit team in China. Wherever you go in the world, if a business is on the map at all, chances are you'll find a CPA involved at some level.

## There's more in it for you than a plane ticket.

It's true, international business is fueling the demand for CPAs. As the pace of globalization regains speed for his firm's clients, Gary Baker, U.S. global mobility leader for PricewaterhouseCoopers, says, "One of our business priorities is to further increase the mobility of

**Wherever you go in the world, if a business is on the map at all, chances are you'll find a CPA involved at some level.**



our people to improve the overall talent in our global network. We expect to see even greater opportunities over the next three to five years.”

Tom Vucinic, President of Becker Professional Education, has noted that the CPA credential not only creates opportunities for international experience, the experience gained can also be critical to career growth. “Employers all over the world recognize the value that CPAs bring to their organizations. Over the past fifty years in our work with CPA candidates, we’ve seen the national CPA credential become a global asset for those who earn it.”

It’s a message not lost on young professionals. Scott Cameron, senior manager at Grant Thornton, a Chicago-based accounting firm with a global presence, says that in his firm’s on-campus recruiting efforts he’s seen a significant increase in students’ interest in international opportunities. “Five years ago, we might have had one or two inquiries over the course of the day,” he says. “Now, it seems to be a topic we discuss with every other student we interview. They understand that the marketplace is more competitive and that international experience is great for career growth.”

### Preparing to make the journey.

So how do you go about securing an international assignment? On one level, it’s deceptively simple because the demand is there with the major global accounting firms and multi-national corporations, as well as with smaller businesses in virtually every industry. On the flip side, landing a global assignment can be complex simply because international business is complex. Issues such as differences in international accounting standards and principles, professional credentials, and licensure must be taken into consideration. Experience plays heavily into the equation. Often, just as important are the challenges related to language and cultural differences.

Preparing yourself to meet those

challenges takes more than just a desire to see the world. Obviously global firms and corporations expect a mastery of accounting and a high level of professionalism from international team members. But accounting expertise alone is not enough. Firms also look for individuals who have a broad view of the world and how social customs and cultural diversity affect the way business is done in other countries. A second or even third language is also a major asset—sometimes even a requirement—if you’re aiming for a longer-term international career.

### Where to look. Today and tomorrow.

Most of the major accounting firms and many large multi-national corporations have formal global mobility programs that groom staff members for international responsibilities ranging from relatively short three-to-six-month assignments to longer ones lasting several years. Few, if any, new CPAs land their dream international assignment first thing off the bat. Nonetheless, a number of very valuable early career opportunities for overseas experience and career development do exist.

For example, just this year, Ernst & Young is launching a new global exchange internship program that places students in short-term international assignments with the firm. “We’re seeing students come in with a pre-loaded global mindset,” says Karen Glover, who heads up global mobility for the firm, “Eighty-eight percent of the participants at our recent international intern conference had already traveled outside their home countries.”

Glover also points to the firm’s Corporate Responsibility Fellows initiative. This competitive program sends high-performing Ernst & Young staff members to work with high-impact entrepreneurs in Central and South America for three-month assignments. These are typically smaller ventures that otherwise could not access such sophisticated advice, but that still have the potential to

## Commitment and a plan.

Karl Hackenbrack, director of Vanderbilt University’s Master of Accountancy (MAcc) program, offers some practical advice to students who want to make themselves more attractive in the international marketplace. In addition to excelling in your academic program, of course, he says it takes commitment and a plan:

- Read and absorb all you can about the global capital markets and international business
- Study and master other language skills
- Travel internationally, just to experience other countries and cultures
- Pursue a well-rounded, liberal arts undergraduate education
- Demonstrate an awareness of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)
- Take the CPA Exam as soon as possible. And pass, of course.

### How important is passing the CPA Exam?

Critical says Hackenbrack. In fact, Vanderbilt’s Owen Graduate School of Management has established a collaborative program with Becker Professional Education through which MAcc students can complete an intensive Becker review course immediately after graduation and then sit for the full CPA Exam. Visit [becker.com/cpa](http://becker.com/cpa) to see the additional universities that offer similar opportunities with Becker.

contribute significantly to the economy in which they operate.

At PricewaterhouseCoopers, EPIC—Early PwC International Challenge—focuses on senior associates with three-to-five years of experience who have indicated a definite interest in international work. Those who qualify—a high job performance rating is prerequisite—embark on a two-year international assignment to one of a host of exciting destinations in major established economic centers and key developing global markets.

PwC's Gary Baker, whose own career has been enhanced by his international assignments, says, "Global assignments help build competencies and skills that generate lasting personal and professional rewards. Working outside their home country, our people often face challenges that require highly creative problem-solving skills, which in turn build their self-confidence and leadership abilities. They also expand their personal and professional networks on a global scale."

### It's a big world out there. Or is it?

When you look at the world through the lens of a CPA, it doesn't take long to discover that accounting—the language of business—has a way to go before it's truly an international one. Accounting principles and standards vary from country to country, sometimes significantly, which can create serious challenges for companies that routinely cross international borders to do business.

To help find workable, long-term solutions to the complexities of international accounting, both the US Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) and the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) have committed themselves to developing a common set of accounting standards. Known as International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), their goal is to enhance the quality, comparability, and consistency of global financial reporting.

So what does that mean to accounting students planning their careers? Ob-



viously it will require new knowledge and skills with implications for education and credentialing. It also makes the CPA credential even more important. Because it is globally recognized and respected, CPAs will remain in the forefront of the profession—as leaders, innovators, and citizens of the world.

### A global view from abroad.

Fadi Ganni, Managing Director of the Morgan Group, represents Becker Professional Education's sizable presence in the Middle East, India, and Canada. He sees firsthand the growing global demand for CPAs in both domestic and non-domestic firms and corporations. "As the most valued accounting qualification in the world's leading economy, the CPA credential is respected globally. It can open doors anywhere in the world to a wealth of opportunities for moving up the ladder at a faster pace and at higher pay."

Growth in Becker's CPA Exam Review registrations internationally confirms his view. Becker now offers CPA Exam Review opportunities in 40 locations in Europe, Middle East, Asia Pacific including China, India, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

### Want to go global? Make yourself marketable.

It's safe to say that the CPA credential can be a critical stepping stone to advancement and professional achievement in accounting. Scott Cameron, who says that his international assignment with Grant Thornton in London was a "once-in-lifetime opportunity," agrees. He advises students interested in working internationally, "Make yourself marketable. Sit for the CPA Exam as soon as you can. Having the credential made my international experience possible."

He adds, "To be considered for the best international assignments, you must understand the global environment you'll be working in. Take courses in international business and IFRS. Become conversational in another language. If two candidates are vying for the same international position, the one who speaks the language has the advantage. And try to do some international travel. Students who travel just seem to have a different perspective; they're more adaptable and insightful, qualities we look for in the candidates we hire."

*For more information about Becker Professional Education visit [becker.com](http://becker.com) or call +1.877.CPA.Exam (+1.877.272.3926).*



"Wow! I passed all 4 parts the first time. I could not have done it without Becker. The materials are great and the national instructors are amazing. Thanks so much to everyone at Becker for helping me pass."

- CPA CANDIDATE AND  
BECKER ALUM

# PREPARED FOR *stepping up on exam day*

You've got this test covered. Becker Professional Education has helped accounting professionals pass the CPA exam with confidence for more than 50 years. With Becker you can:

- Pass at double the rate of non-Becker candidates\*
- Join over 400,000 successful candidates who prepared with Becker
- Tailor our program to the demands of your busy life with live, online and self-study formats

**Log on to [becker.com/cpa](http://becker.com/cpa) and prepare to succeed.**

\* Becker Professional Education students pass at twice the rate of all CPA exam candidates who did not take a review course from Becker, based on averages of AICPA-published pass rates.  
©2009 Becker Professional Development Corporation. All rights reserved.



**BECKER**<sup>TM</sup>  
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION