GUIDANCE FOR FIRMS ON THE USE OF:
- THE DESCRIPTION “CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS”
- THE DESIGNATORY LETTERS “CA”
INTRODUCTION

In order to protect the public interest and the reputation of the profession, it is important that ICAS is able to carefully control the use of the description “Chartered Accountants” and the designatory letters “CA”. We do this in a number of ways, including registered trademarks and enforcing specific provisions in our Rules and Regulations.

At the same time, we recognise how important it is for our Members and Firms to be able to distinguish themselves from unregulated accountants and to be able to utilise the market advantage of the CA brand.

Therefore, ICAS has introduced processes through which Firms can use the following in certain circumstances:

- The words “Chartered Accountants”
- The designatory letters “CA”

This FAQ-style guidance is intended to help Firms better understand when and how these may be used.

In this guidance, “Firm” means any entity through which an ICAS Member is supplying accountancy or related services, including sole practitioners, partnerships, LLPs and limited companies. Separate guidance on Firm names and requirements for letterheads is available on icas.com.

WHEN IS A FIRM ELIGIBLE TO USE THE DESCRIPTION “CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS”? 

As set out in Regulation 7 of the Public Practice Regulations, the main issue is the percentage of principals in the Firm who are Chartered Accountants, that is, members of ICAS, ICAEW or ICAI.

ICAS uses a fairly wide definition of “principals”, including:

- Sole practitioners
- Partners
- Members of an LLP
- Directors of a limited company
- Corporate entities

The eligibility requirements for principals is as follows:

- >50% are Chartered Accountants means the Firm may use the description “Chartered Accountants”
- <50% are Chartered Accountants means the Firm is prohibited from using the description
- If exactly 50% are Chartered Accountants, ICAS will exercise its’ discretion on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the ownership and control within the firm.

Any principal in an eligible Firm who is not a Chartered Accountant must either apply to ICAS to become an Affiliate, or must sign an undertaking to be bound by ICAS’ Rules, Regulations and Code of Ethics, in the same way as ICAS Members and Affiliates.

ARE THERE RESTRICTIONS ON HOW THE DESCRIPTION MAY BE USED IN THE FIRM’S NAME?

Yes – “Chartered Accountants” may only be used as a description and must not form part of the registered name of the Firm.

Therefore, while “Smith Limited” would be permitted to trade as “Smith Chartered Accountants”, it could not be registered at Companies House as “Smith Chartered Accountants Limited”.

A Firm which has “Chartered Accountants” in its registered name will be asked to change the name immediately. As this is a prohibited name, Companies House should automatically reject registration.

While a Firm may choose to use the description in connection with other words - for example, “management consultants” or “tax advisers” – it should only do so where the words used relate to an area of professional business in which the Firm can demonstrate experience and expertise.
**ARE ELIGIBLE FIRMS AUTOMATICALLY ABLE TO USE THE DESIGNATION “CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS”?**

If more than 50% of the Firm’s principals are Chartered Accountants, the Firm may use the designation “Chartered Accountants” without applying to ICAS for permission.

If exactly 50% of the principals are Chartered Accountants, the Firm may only use the designation if ICAS has formally consented in writing.

**WHEN IS A FIRM ELIGIBLE TO USE THE DESIGNATORY LETTERS “CA”?**

The designatory letters “CA” are the exclusive privilege of all ICAS Members and may be used by individual Members upon admission to Membership.

In order to be eligible to use the letters in its trading name, a Firm must meet the following criteria:

- At least 50% of the principals of the Firm must be ICAS Members
- The ICAS Members must have management and voting control of the firm
- Any principal who is not an ICAS Member or Affiliate, and is not a Member of either ICAEW or ICAI, must sign an undertaking to be bound by ICAS’ Rules, Regulations and Code of Ethics, in the same way as ICAS Members and Affiliates.

**ARE THERE RESTRICTIONS ON HOW THE DESIGNATORY LETTERS MAY BE USED IN THE FIRM’S NAME?**

As with the designation “Chartered Accountants”, Firms are not allowed to include the designatory letters “CA” in the registered name of the Firm.

Therefore, while “Smith Limited” would be permitted to trade as “Smith CA”, it could not be registered at Companies House as “Smith CA Limited”. Also, while “ABCA Limited” would not be allowed, “AB Limited” could trade as “ABCA”.

A Firm which has “CA” in its’ registered name will be asked to change the name immediately.

**ARE ELIGIBLE FIRMS AUTOMATICALLY ABLE TO USE THE DESIGNATORY LETTERS “CA”?**

No – Firms which satisfy the eligibility criteria may only use “CA” in the Firm’s trading name if a licence to do so is granted by ICAS.

In order to obtain a licence, the Firm must complete and submit a licence application to ICAS.

If granted, the licence agreement will set out the terms and conditions under which the wording may be used. A Firm which breaches the terms of the agreement – for example, by acting in a way which is damaging to the CA brand – is likely to have the privilege withdrawn immediately.

As applications will only be granted at the discretion of ICAS, we recommend that Firms wait for confirmation of the licence before amending stationery, letterheads or signage.

**ARE OTHER USES OF THE DESIGNATORY LETTERS “CA” COVERED IN THE LICENCE AGREEMENT?**

Yes – if granted, the licence agreement will allow the Firm to use “CA” as follows:

- The URL of the Firm’s website
- The email addresses of the Firm’s employees
- Any profile names used by the Firm on social media

Amongst other things, the application will ask the Firm to confirm how it intends to use the letters in practice.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

A Firm which requires additional support in connection with this guidance is encouraged to make contact with ICAS at practicesupport@icas.com or on 0313 347 0249.