

HIGH SCHOOL TO QUALIFICATION

The CA(SA) Route

Chartered Accountant (South Africa) is the most recognised accounting designation in the country, awarded by SAICA. It takes discipline and time, but it opens doors across audit, finance, and business leadership. Here's the path, step by step.

TYPICAL TIMELINE 6–7 years	GOVERNING BODY SAICA	FINAL EXAMS IAC + APC	GLOBAL REACH Strong in SA & Africa
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Your Roadmap

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1. High School — Lay the groundwork

Take Pure Mathematics (not Maths Literacy) and work hard at English. You'll need roughly a Level 5–6 pass in Maths plus a matric certificate with university exemption. Accounting as a subject helps but isn't compulsory.

Grades 10–12
- 2

2. Bachelor's Degree

Complete a 3-year SAICA-accredited BCom (or equivalent) at a SAICA-accredited university. This is non-negotiable: the degree must appear on SAICA's accredited list.

≈ 3 years
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3. Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting (PGDA / CTA)

Your 'fourth year.' A SAICA-endorsed postgraduate qualification covering Accounting, Auditing, Taxation and Financial Management in depth.

≈ 1 year
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4. Board Exam 1 — IAC (Initial Assessment of Competence)

Written after completing your PGDA. Tests whether you can apply what you've learned to real, integrated problems. Known as the ITC before 2025; same standard, new name.

One sitting, usually written once PGDA is complete

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5. Training Contract (Articles) Begins

Register with a SAICA-accredited training office. Contracts run 36, 48 or 60 months depending on your qualification path, with required core experience hours (3 600 – 6 000 hours) tracked throughout.

3–5 years, alongside a SAICA-endorsed Professional Programme

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6. Board Exam 2 — APC (Assessment of Professional Competence)

Written once you've completed a SAICA-accredited Professional Programme and at least 20 months of your training contract. In practice, this usually lands in your second year of articles, not at the very end.

Typically year 2 of articles

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7. Complete Your Training Contract

Continue working through your remaining core experience hours and competencies for the rest of your contract term after passing the APC.

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8. Discharge & Registration

Once your contract term, core hours and competencies are all signed off, apply for discharge and register with SAICA as a CA(SA).

Final step

Good to know: there's a faster exit too

If you complete your practical requirements and hold an accredited undergraduate degree, you can also register as an AGA(SA) — Associate General Accountant. It's a real, SAICA-backed designation, faster to reach, and a strong option depending on the career you want to build.

Already studying CIMA?

If you complete CIMA and hold a recognised bachelor's degree, there's a shorter route into CA(SA) that skips the IAC entirely. See our CIMA Route Guide for the details.

Requirements can change. Always confirm current details at saica.org.za before making final study decisions. This guide is provided by LGC Foundation as a starting point, not professional advice.