

HIGH SCHOOL TO QUALIFICATION

The CIMA Route

CIMA (the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) is the world's leading qualification in management accounting and business strategy, and one of the few routes school leavers can start immediately. Here's the path, step by step.

TYPICAL TIMELINE 2–4 years	GOVERNING BODY CIMA (Global)	DESIGNATION CGMA	GLOBAL REACH 170+ countries
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Your Roadmap

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1. High School — You can start straight from matric

CIMA is open to school leavers. You'll want solid Mathematics and English, but unlike some routes, you don't need an accounting background to begin.

Grades 10–12
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2. Register with CIMA Global

Where you start depends on what you already hold. School leavers generally begin at Certificate level. If you already have a BCom or accounting diploma, you may enter directly at Operational or Management level through the Gateway route.

Certificate → Operational → Management → Strategic
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3. Certificate Level (if starting from school)

Foundational papers covering the basics of business, economics, and accounting. Skipped entirely if you qualify for a Gateway entry.
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4. Operational, Management & Strategic Levels

Each level combines Objective Tests (one per subject) with a Case Study exam applying everything to a realistic business scenario. Difficulty and strategic thinking build with each level.

The core of the qualification
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5. Practical Experience

Relevant workplace experience recorded and demonstrated as you progress, generally built up alongside your studies rather than as a separate block at the end.

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6. CGMA Designation

On completion you earn ACMA, CGMA — Chartered Global Management Accountant — recognised in over 170 countries and respected by multinational employers.

Final step

Good to know: Gateway routes can fast-track you

Already hold a SAIPA qualification, a Master's in Accounting, or an MBA? The Master's Gateway can move you straight to the Management Case Study. SAIPA and ACCA members may also qualify for the Professional Gateway. Worth checking before you assume you're starting from the beginning.

The integration leg: CIMA into CA(SA)

This is the pathway many students don't know exists. If you complete CIMA (hold ACMA, CGMA status) and you also hold a recognised bachelor's degree at NQF Level 7 or higher (minimum 3 years, 360+ credits, South African or SAQA-recognised equivalent), you can convert into the CA(SA) pipeline without starting over.

How it works: SAICA verifies your CIMA standing through a Letter of Good Standing and confirms your degree. You then complete a SAICA-accredited Professional Programme, and write only the APC — not the IAC (formerly called the ITC) — within three consecutive years of finishing that programme.

Without a degree, this shortcut isn't available, so if this is your plan, make sure a recognised bachelor's degree is part of your journey somewhere along the way.

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