

# Acca to open its account online

Studying and writing exams via cellphone could become a reality soon, says Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA)

BY WORKPLACE STAFF

RESEARCH conducted by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (Acca) and Lighthouse Global confirms that online approaches to learning and assessment are having a huge impact on professional development and training for finance professionals, and will continue to do so in the future.

Recognising that the world of work is becoming increasingly online and that it needs to develop and support professionals, Acca commissioned research into e-learning and e-assessment.

"We wanted to gauge how employers are adopting technology-enabled learning and assessment," says Acca head Nadine Kater. "We also wanted to better understand the key drivers for its adoption."

The report, *The E-Professional: embracing learning technologies*, crystallises the opinions of a panel of experts from multinational corporations, global professional service firms, learning providers and other professional bodies.

Panellists included: Standard Chartered Bank learning designer May Chan; General Pharmaceutical Council head of education and registration policy Damian Day; Towards Maturity managing director Laura Overton; BDO director of technical training and student qualifications Greg Owens; PwC Global Development leader Richard Pollard; World Class Arena CEO Martin Ripley; Shell vice-president Jim Robertson; BPP Business Schools CEO Martin Taylor; and Ernst & Young director Kristin Watson.

Panellists recommended viewing technology as a facilitator of change rather than a silver bullet; ensuring that content for e-learning fits into a blended programme of learning; investing sufficient time and resources on planning and designing e-learning products; and ensuring that technology is user-friendly and intuitive to use.

"There was a general con-



LOOKING TO E-FUTURE: Michelle Crosby (business relationship manager of Acca SA), Nerés Bowen (communications officer of POPUP), Marlene Freislich (POPUP CEO), Nadine Kater (head of Acca SA) and Melanie Williams (office manager, Acca SA).

sensus among panellists that e-learning and assessment can create a better learning experience," Kater elaborates.

"There was also consensus that e-assessment creates more scope to develop more challenging and realistic tests for assessing a candidate's skills and competencies.

"Most importantly, the panellists concurred that quality is not compromised when technology-enhanced learning and assessment is deployed."

Universities, colleges and corporates worldwide have embraced e-learning. The ability to assess skills and compe-

tencies, provide tuition, and conduct exams via mobile devices in particular will be extremely important for Africa as a whole.

"The innovative way in which mobile technology is being used in Africa is well documented," says Kater.

"There are around 500 million cellular phone subscribers in Africa, and approximately 10.2 million cellphone users in South Africa. Africa has pioneered mobile banking and many web users in Africa use mobile devices only."

Acca is on track to tap into technology for professional

development purposes: it signed a contract with Summit Consulting Group earlier this year to develop an innovative e-assessment programme.

This, says Kater, is the start of a move towards on-demand exams.

Where corporate social investment is concerned, Acca has recently adopted a different approach. In lieu of providing guests with a gift at its annual Sustainability Reporting Awards function, Acca opted to hand over a cheque to the People Upliftment Programme (Popup).

"We thought it more appro-

priate and sustainable to donate money to a non-profit organisation instead," Kater explains. "Popup is a worthy recipient as it empowers the poorest of poor - this is something very close to our hearts."

Accountability, credibility and good corporate governance are the hallmark of everything that Popup does and these are also key considerations for Acca's corporate social investment decisions, she says.

Based in Pretoria, Popup is primarily a training facility providing skills development and training for unemployed and disempowered individuals.

Skills programmes include home management, catering, garment and decor manufacturing, early child development, home-based care, computer and secretarial expertise, arts and crafts, forklift driving training, business skills and life skills.

Programmes address the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those who walk through Popup's doors. Popups' training programmes boast a 95% completion rate with an average of 72 learners completing these programmes each year. On completion of training, Popup tries to

place "graduates" in employment.

Popup CEO Marlene Freislich was delighted to accept the cheque from Acca.

She explained that while Popup had received R2.5 million in funding from the Department of Health and Social Development during the past financial year, the lion's share of funding came from corporates and individuals.

"While each candidate pays just R300 to complete any of the skills programmes, these programmes cost us between R6 000 and R12 500," Freislich said.

## What Acca offers

● Acca is an international body for professional accountants.

● Acca qualifications are:  
1. Introductory Certificate in Financial and Management Accounting

2. Intermediate Certificate in Financial and Management Accounting  
3. Diploma in Accounting and Business

4. Certified Accounting Technician (CAT)

5. Chartered Certified Accountant (ACCA)

● Even if your matric certificate doesn't give you university entrance, it is possible to obtain one of these recognised financial qualifications that enable you to enter the financial field. For example, the only admission requirements for CAT are that candidates must be 16 years or older, and literate and numerate.

● For more information and a list of all of the registered and accredited institutes that offer Acca courses, go to [www.acca.co.za](http://www.acca.co.za).

Popup also offers medical services, community dentistry and eye testing. Beneficiaries include people with no medical aid; households with incomes of less than R3 000 per month, residents of old age homes and shelters; and children. Popup also cares for 60 toddlers to whom Acca has donated toys, crayons, balls and play-dough.

"With 11.9 million children alone in South Africa living in poverty, and millions of adults unemployed, the need for such programmes is great," says Kater.

"We urge our colleagues in the accounting and auditing profession to consider sponsoring Popup. It is only by creating sustainable communities that we can hope to push a sustainability agenda and create a sustainable world."