ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ICAG'S CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON THE COMPETENCY OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA

ICAG AND WACAR RESEARCH REPORT

2026

ABOUT **ICAG**

ICAG (Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana), established in 1963, is the premier national organization dedicated to advancing the accountancy profession and serving the public interest in Ghana.

With over 12,740 members and 31,750 aspiring professionals, ICAG represents a vibrant community of accounting and finance experts committed to the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and excellence.

ICAG equips professionals across Ghana and the Sub-Region for rewarding careers in accountancy, finance, and management. Through our top-tier educational programs and professional development initiatives, we cultivate our members' financial expertise, business acumen, and digital skills, preparing them to thrive in a dynamic global environment.

Our members, employed across diverse industries, drive economic growth and social progress. ICAG firmly believes that the accountancy profession is a pillar of society, fostering the growth and prosperity of Ghana's economy, businesses, and citizens. By upholding robust financial management practices, combating fraud, promoting ethical leadership, and championing sustainable development, our members lead positive transformation.

ICAG drives accountancy innovation through rigorous research and thought leadership. Our studies address current challenges and anticipate trends, maintaining our position at the forefront of the field. This research-driven, non-profit approach allows us to focus on long-term sector needs, making ICAG a key catalyst for evidence-based progress in Ghana's financial landscape and beyond.

Find out more at: https://www.icagh.org/

ABOUT THE **WACAR**

The West African Centre for Accountancy Research (WACAR), established in Ghana in April 2023 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG), stands as the premier hub for financial research in West Africa. WACAR's mission is to revolutionize public financial management, governance, and accountability across the region through rigorous, data-driven inquiry.

WACAR's multidisciplinary team employs advanced methodologies to produce authoritative, evidence-based recommendations in financial reporting, auditing, governance, and tax policy. These high-calibre insights directly inform policy decisions, enhance standards, and foster sustainable economic growth tailored to West Africa's unique socioeconomic landscape.

Guided by principles of integrity, collaboration, innovation, and measurable impact, WACAR stands at the forefront of accounting research. The Centre's commitment to academic excellence and practical application positions it as an emerging global thought leader, driving transformative change in financial governance.

WACAR's outputs are poised to make significant, quantifiable contributions to West African financial ecosystems. By addressing critical challenges, WACAR's work promises to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance transparency, and ultimately improve economic outcomes for millions across the region.

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ICAG'S CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON THE COMPETENCY OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA

ICAG AND WACAR RESEARCH REPORT

Osei Adjaye-Gyamfi, FCA (Director, Technical and Research, ICAG and WACAR)

Samuel Koranteng Fianko, P.h.D (Research Manager, ICAG and WACAR)

Frederick Agropah, CA (Assistant Manager, Research, ICAG and WACAR)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors of this report would like to express our profound gratitude to the Member Services Directorate of ICAG and all members of ICAG for their support in this study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluating the Effectiveness of ICAG's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programmes

This report presents the findings of ICAG's **first formal evaluation of its CPD programmes**. The study was conducted by the **West African Centre for Accountancy Research (WACAR)** the Research Unit of ICAG, drawing on a **structured survey of 273 members** in good standing across the public sector, industry and commerce, financial services, public practice and consulting.

DATA ANALYSED USING

Descriptive statistics • Paired-sample t-tests • Correlation & regression analysis
Mediation modelling • 95% confidence level

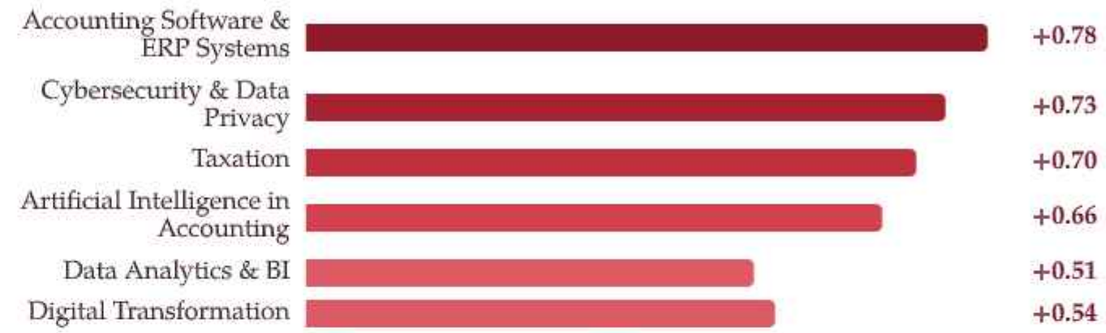
1 CPD PROGRAMME QUALITY IS STRONG

All nine programme quality dimensions were rated above the scale midpoint.

The weakest dimension by a clear margin is post-training **follow-up support (M = 3.30)**, the point where the system currently ends too early.

2 CPD IS BUILDING COMPETENCE, ESPECIALLY IN DIGITAL AREAS

All digital & technological competencies improved significantly ($p < .001$). Top improvements:



Learning is being applied at work:

apply CPD-acquired knowledge at least **WEEKLY**

apply CPD-acquired knowledge at least **MONTHLY**

Decision-making quality and problem-solving show the strongest CPD-attributable workplace gains.

3 ATTENDANCE IS NOT THE SAME AS LEARNING

Frequency of CPD attendance has **NO relationship** to competency

r = .031 *(not significant)*

Perceived programme quality **PREDICTS** competency significantly

r = .251

This effect is **transmitted substantially** through workplace application

r = .313

What members attend matters far less than the quality of what they attend and whether they apply it. This challenges the logic of a compliance model that certifies hours attended rather than outcomes.

4 STRUCTURAL BARRIERS CONSTRAIN PARTICIPATION

Programme cost

Scheduling conflicts

Near absence of **structured follow-up** after training events

These barriers limit fuller engagement and reduce the reach and impact of CPD across the membership.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

1 OUTCOMES, NOT ATTENDANCE

Phase the transition from attendance-based to outcomes-based CPD verification, aligned with the competence orientation of IES 7.

2 STRUCTURED FOLLOW-UP

Introduce post-training follow-up, including application check-ins and refresher touchpoints, to consolidate learning transfer.

3 FLEXIBLE, ACCESSIBLE DELIVERY

Adopt modular, short-form and flexibly scheduled delivery. Review pricing to remove cost and scheduling barriers.

4 PRIORITY CONTENT FOCUS

Expand programming in artificial intelligence, data analytics and sustainability reporting – the areas of greatest gains and member demand.

6 THE WAY FORWARD

The evidence confirms that ICAG's CPD system rests on a sound foundation of quality and relevance. The task ahead is not repair but redesign at the margins that matter:

Verify learning rather than attendance | Support members after the training room | Make participation affordable and schedulable for all | Drive outcomes that strengthen professional competence

The recommendations in this report chart the course for a stronger, more impactful CPD system.

STATEMENT FROM
OUR PRESIDENT

Public confidence in the chartered accountant rests on competence that is continuously renewed. This report, commissioned by the Institute examines whether our Continuing Professional Development programmes are delivering on that promise.

The evidence, drawn from 273 members across the public sector, industry, financial services, public practice and consulting, is affirming. Our CPD is well regarded and is building real capability, most strongly in digital and technological competencies. Members were equally candid about its shortcomings: cost and scheduling limit access, too little follows a training event to consolidate learning, and our compliance framework certifies attendance rather than proficiency. These are structural matters, and the recommendations in this report set out the structural response Council intends to pursue.

I thank every member who contributed and the research team that turned their insights into evidence. Together they have given the Institute the means to ensure CPD delivers measurable, career-long value to all who carry our designation.

Augustine Addo, FCA
President, ICAG

STATEMENT FROM THE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Every credential is a promise, and the Secretariat's responsibility is to ensure that promise remains current. This report assesses how effectively our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes fulfil that responsibility, drawing on the experiences of members across every major sector of practice in Ghana.

Two conclusions stand out. The core of our delivery is sound: facilitators, topic relevance, delivery methods and materials are all rated highly. The systems around it need work: follow-up support is thin, affordability and scheduling remain obstacles, and we verify attendance rather than learning.

Management treats these findings as a work programme. The Secretariat will move CPD verification toward demonstrated outcomes, institute structured post-training follow-up, introduce modular short-form learning suited to members' schedules, and expand programming in artificial intelligence, data analytics and sustainability reporting.

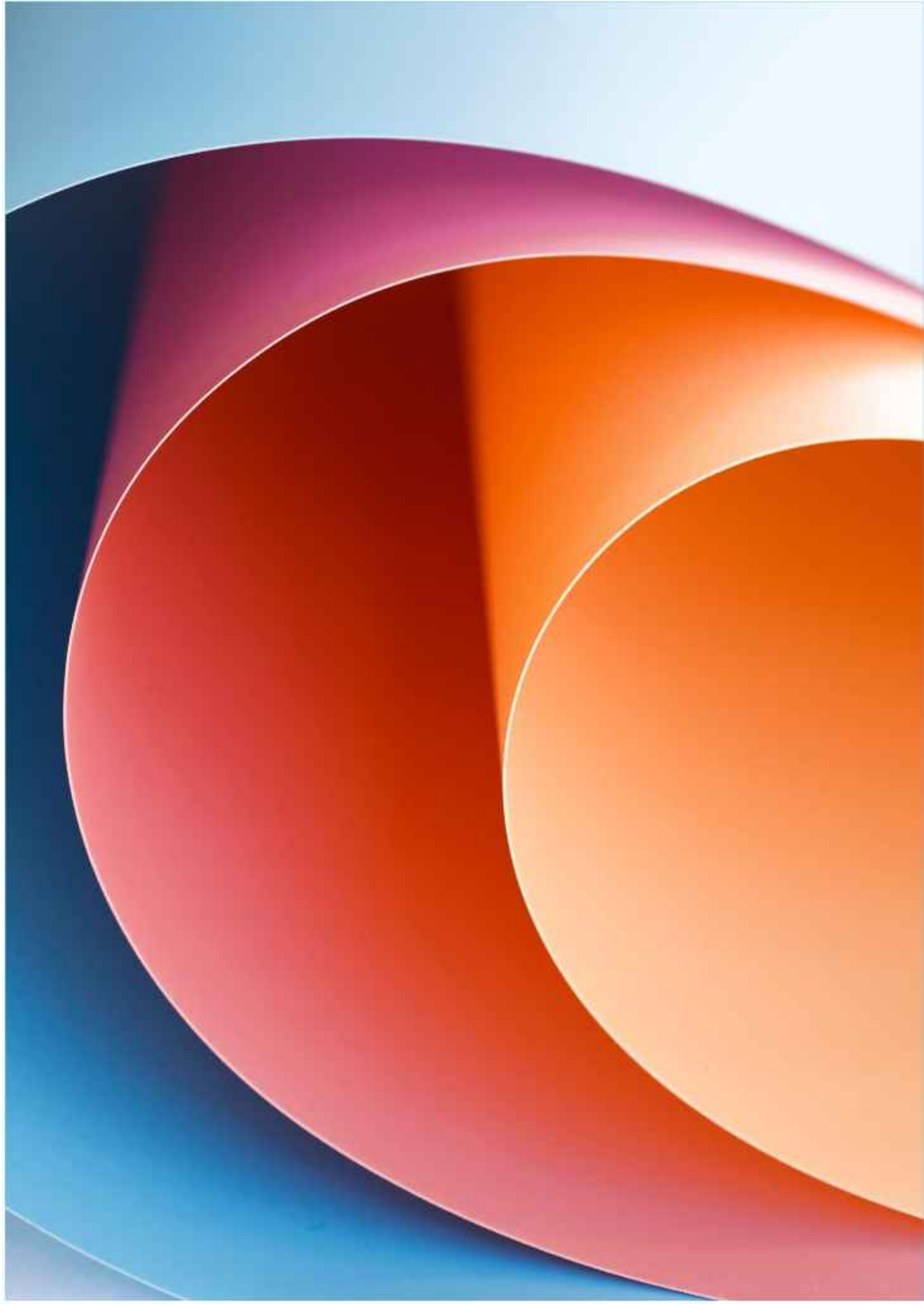
I thank our members and the research team. This study is an investment in the continuing relevance of the chartered accountant designation, and management will be measured by the results it yields.

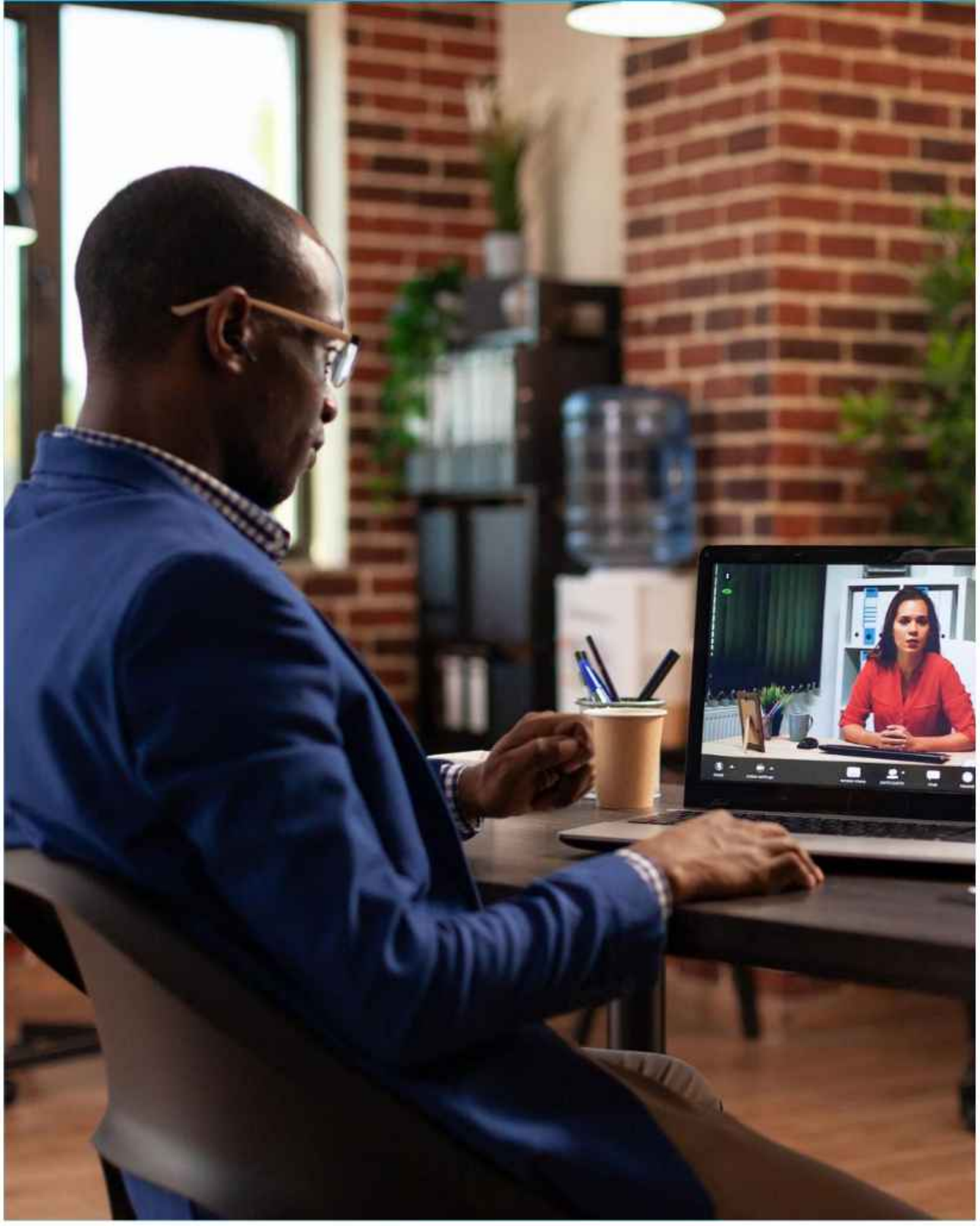
E. O. Osae, FCA
Chief Executive Officer, ICAG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures





1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

- The chartered accountant designation certifies not a fixed body of knowledge but a continuing capacity to perform to professional standards in an environment that is changing faster than at any point in the profession's history. As business becomes increasingly globalised, digitalised and regulated, the responsibilities of professional accountants have expanded beyond bookkeeping and financial reporting to encompass strategic decision-making, risk management, sustainability reporting, digital transformation and corporate governance [1, 2]. Maintaining professional competence throughout an accountant's career has therefore become a strategic necessity rather than a professional option, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the principal mechanism through which professional accountancy organisations worldwide require and enable this lifelong learning [1, 3, 4].

- As the sole statutory regulator of the accountancy profession in Ghana, ICAG carries a dual mandate: to uphold the competence standards that protect the credibility of the designation, and to ensure that the CPD system through which more than 11,000 members maintain that competence is effective, relevant and accessible. This mandate has sharpened following the revision of International Education Standard 7 (IES 7) by the International Accounting Education Standards Board, which shifted global expectations from the accumulation of annual learning hours towards demonstrated competency development, workplace application and measurable learning outcomes [1, 5]. The relevant question for ICAG is therefore no longer whether members are attending CPD, but whether attendance is translating into competence [6].

- The pressure on CPD systems is intensified by the Fourth Industrial Revolution [7]. Artificial intelligence, data analytics, cybersecurity, cloud computing and integrated sustainability reporting, including the new IFRS S1 and S2 disclosure standards, have fundamentally altered the competency requirements of professional accountants [8, 9, 10], and most of today's members qualified before these domains entered the professional curriculum. CPD is consequently the only realistic bridging mechanism between qualification-era training and current professional demands, yet the international evidence consistently shows that compliance with CPD hour requirements alone does not guarantee competency improvement unless programmes are relevant, well designed and supported by mechanisms for workplace application [4, 6, 11].

- Until now, the effectiveness of ICAG's CPD programmes has been understood largely through attendance records and post-event satisfaction ratings rather than systematic evidence of competency outcomes, an approach that captures only the lowest level of established training evaluation frameworks [12] and overlooks whether learning is transferred to workplace performance [13].

- The purpose of this study, therefore, is to assess the effectiveness of ICAG's CPD

programmes in enhancing the competency of chartered accountants in Ghana by examining members' perceptions of programme quality, measuring self-assessed competency change across technical, digital and professional skill domains, evaluating the workplace application and tangible impact of CPD-acquired learning, and identifying priority competency gaps and delivery preferences. In doing so, the study seeks to generate an evidence base from which ICAG can target reforms spanning programme design, verification, pricing, scheduling and content, in order to maximise the professional value of CPD without diminishing the rigour the designation is meant to certify.

1.2 Research Questions

1. This study was designed to address the following research questions:

2. How do chartered accountants perceive the quality, relevance and delivery effectiveness of ICAG's CPD programmes?

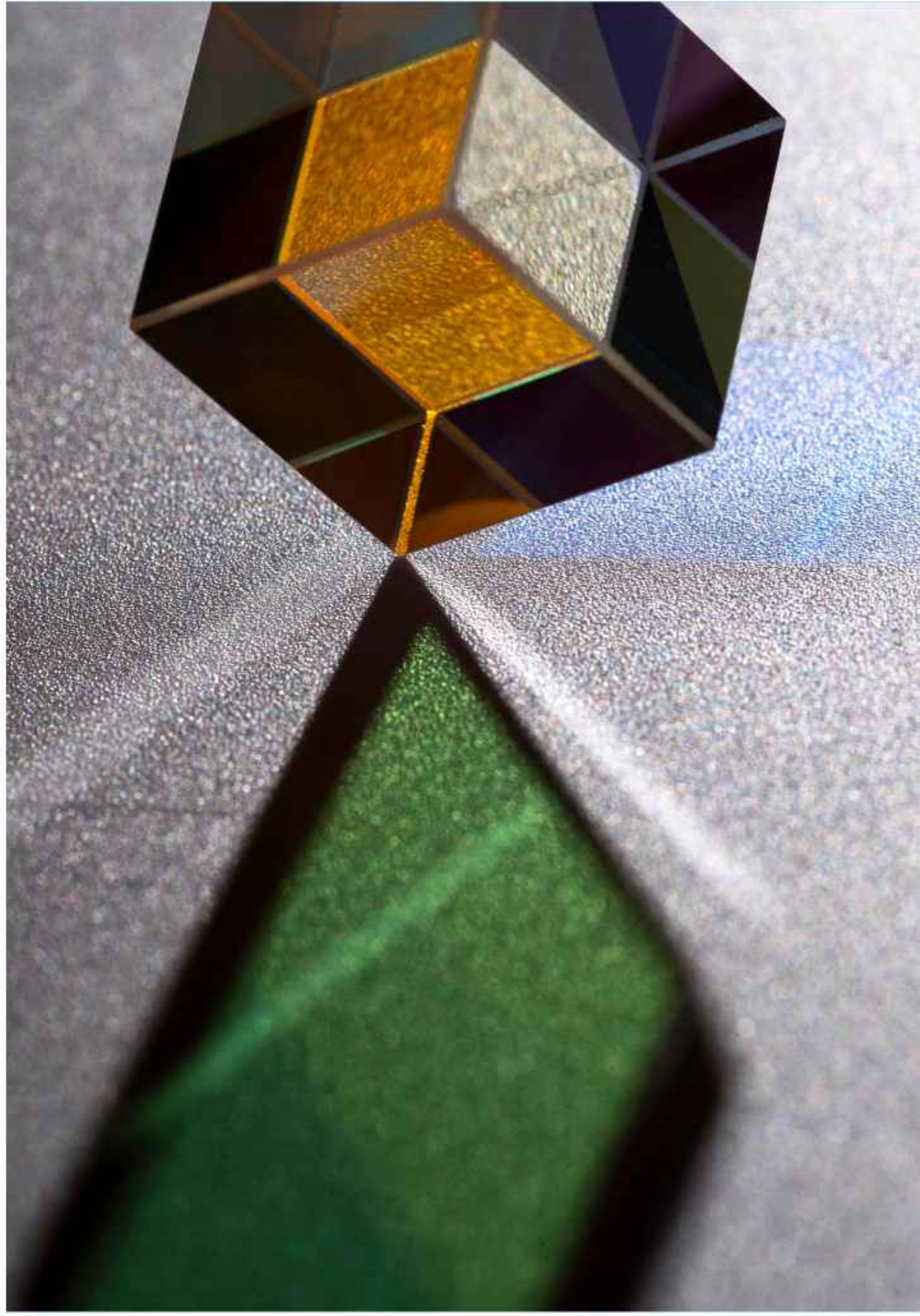
3. To what extent do CPD programmes enhance members' competencies across technical, digital and professional skill domains?

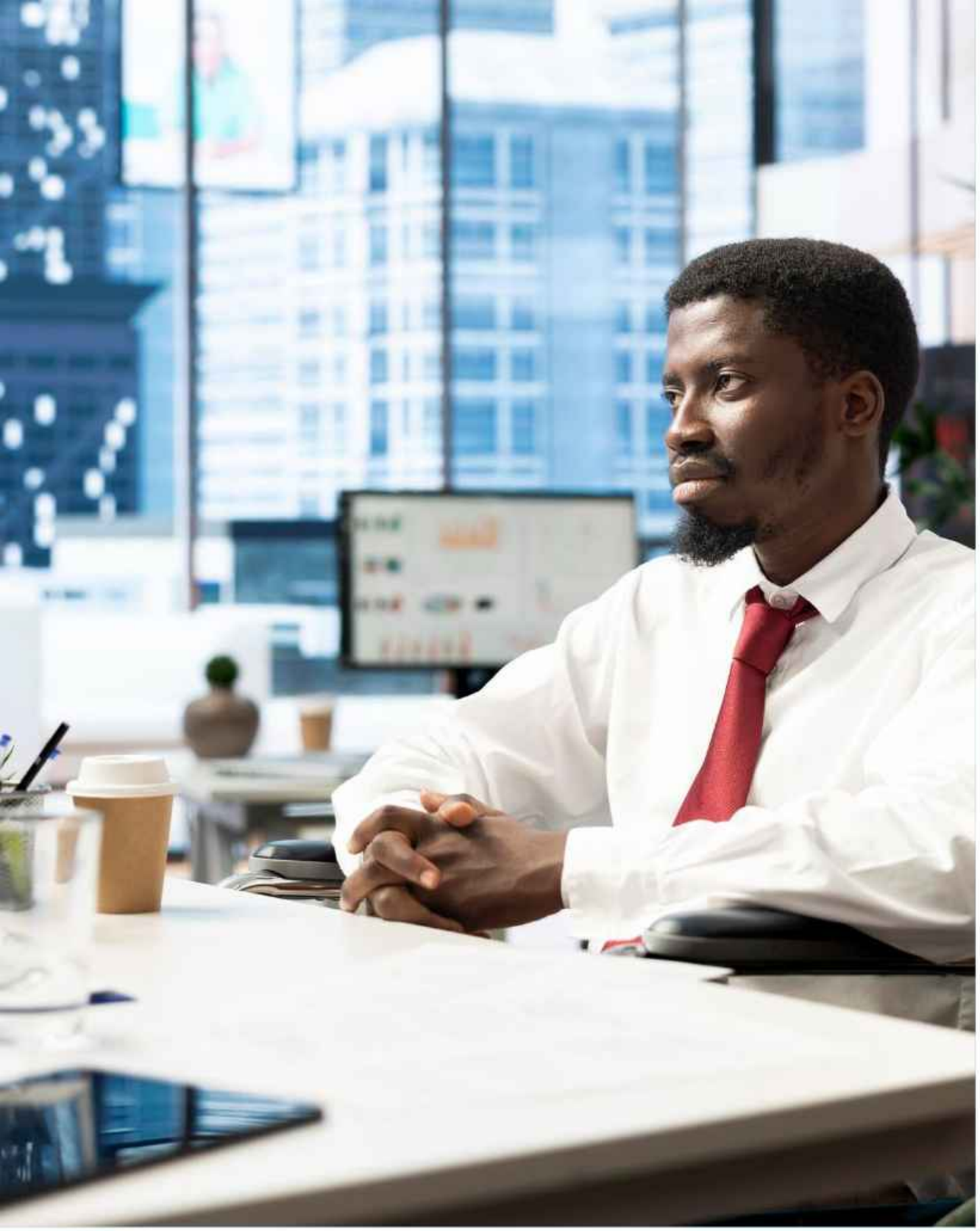
4. How, and with what tangible impact, do members apply CPD-acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

5. What priority competency gaps and future CPD needs exist among chartered accountants, and how do members prefer CPD to be delivered and scheduled?

1.3 Significance of the Study

For the Institute, the findings support data-driven decisions on CPD curriculum design, verification models, pricing, scheduling and post-training support, replacing assumption with evidence at a moment when IES 7 requires professional bodies to demonstrate outcomes rather than inputs. For members and their employers, they clarify where CPD investment yields the greatest professional return and identify the organisational conditions under which CPD learning translates into workplace performance. For the wider profession, the study contributes to the limited empirical literature on CPD effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa, offering insights applicable to comparable professional accountancy organisations across the region.





2. METHODOLOGY

- A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed [14]. A structured, closed-ended questionnaire, covering CPD participation and motivations, perceived programme quality, self-assessed competency before and after CPD across seventeen competency areas, workplace application and career outcomes, and future CPD needs and delivery preferences, was administered electronically, with participation voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity assured. Items were measured on five-point Likert scales, and the instrument was refined through expert review and pilot testing among twenty chartered accountants [14].

- The target population comprised all registered members of ICAG in good standing and practising in Ghana (N > 11,000), spanning the public sector, industry and commerce, financial services, public practice, consulting and academia. Stratified random sampling was used, with strata defined by practice sector, career phase and geographic location, to obtain a representative cross-section of the membership. Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error indicated a minimum sample of approximately 386 [15]; a total of 273 usable responses was obtained, which is treated as adequately representative for descriptive and inferential analysis while findings for small subgroups are interpreted with appropriate caution.

- Data were screened, coded and analysed in IBM SPSS [16]. Descriptive statistics, comprising frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, summarised member perceptions. Paired-sample t-tests measured competency change before and after CPD participation; Pearson's correlation and multiple regression examined the relationships among programme quality, CPD frequency, workplace impact and competency outcomes; and one-way ANOVA and independent-samples t-tests examined differences by position level, professional experience and gender [16]. All inferential tests were conducted at the 95% confidence level.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Response Rate and Respondent Profile

A total of 273 usable responses were obtained from members across all major sectors of professional practice, representing 70.7% of the minimum sample of 386 indicated by Yamane's formula. The sample is predominantly male (83.5%), concentrated in the 30–39 (42.1%) and 40–49 (33.7%) age bands, and weighted towards early and mid-career professionals, with 37.4% holding less than five years of post-qualification experience and 30.8% holding five to ten years. The public sector is the most represented employment sector (38.5%), followed by industry and commerce (17.9%), financial services (13.6%), public practice (11.4%) and consulting (6.2%). Senior staff constitute the largest position band (42.1%), with managers and senior managers together contributing a further 40.6%.

Engagement with CPD is moderate and clustered around the compliance threshold: 38.8% of respondents attended one to two programmes in the preceding twelve months and 35.2% attended three to five, while only 6.2% attended more than ten and an equal proportion attended none. The sample therefore primarily reflects practising members with recent, direct exposure to ICAG's CPD offerings, while the pronounced gender imbalance, consistent with the structural composition of the profession in Ghana, means that gender-disaggregated findings should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 1: Demographic and Professional Profile of Respondents (N = 273)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender	Male	228	83.5
	Female	45	16.5
Age range	Below 30 years	19	7.0
	30–39 years	115	42.1
	40–49 years	92	33.7
	50–59 years	30	11.0
	60 years and above	17	6.2
Professional experience	Less than 5 years	102	37.4
	5–10 years	84	30.8
	11–15 years	45	16.5
	16–20 years	23	8.4
	Over 20 years	19	7.0
Work sector	Public sector	105	38.5

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
	Industry/Commerce	49	17.9
	Financial services	37	13.6
	Public practice (audit/assurance)	31	11.4
	Consulting	17	6.2
	Other (academia, NGO, etc.)	34	12.5
Position/level	Junior staff	15	5.5
	Senior staff	115	42.1
	Manager/Assistant Manager	56	20.5
	Senior Manager	55	20.1
	Partner/Director/C-Suite	16	5.9
	Self-employed/Sole practitioner	16	5.9
CPD attended (last 12 months)	None	17	6.2
	1–2 programmes	106	38.8
	3–5 programmes	96	35.2
	6–10 programmes	37	13.6
	More than 10 programmes	17	6.2

Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.2.1 Primary Motivations for CPD Participation

The desire to enhance technical competencies is the predominant reason for participating in CPD (82.1%), followed closely by compliance with mandatory CPD requirements (77.3%), staying updated with regulatory change (71.4%) and personal professional development interest (70.7%). Career advancement motivates 60.1% of respondents, consistent with the view of CPD as an investment in human capital. Notably, networking (34.1%) and addressing specific work challenges (29.7%) rank lowest, suggesting that members perceive CPD principally as a formal source of technical updating rather than as a collaborative problem-solving forum, and that programmes are not yet seen as a timely response to the challenges members encounter in daily practice.

Table 2: Primary Reasons for CPD Participation (Multiple Responses, N = 273)

Reason for attending	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Enhance technical competencies	224	82.1
Meet mandatory CPD requirements	211	77.3
Stay updated with regulatory changes	195	71.4
Personal professional development interest	193	70.7
Acquire new skills	181	66.3
Career advancement	164	60.1
Networking opportunities	93	34.1
Address specific work challenges	81	29.7

Note: Percentages exceed 100% due to multiple selections. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.2.2 Barriers to CPD Participation

Cost and financial constraints constitute the dominant barrier to CPD participation, cited by 81.7% of respondents, followed by time constraints and work schedule conflicts (64.1%). The prominence of cost is particularly consequential given that 77.3% of members attend CPD primarily to meet mandatory requirements: the very activity the Institute requires is the one members find hardest to afford. Location and accessibility issues affect a smaller share (17.2%), while lack of relevant topics (7.3%) is rarely cited and no respondent identified poor programme quality or lack of awareness as an obstacle. Barriers to participation are therefore structural and economic rather than reputational, indicating that reform effort should concentrate on affordability and scheduling rather than on programme image or communication.

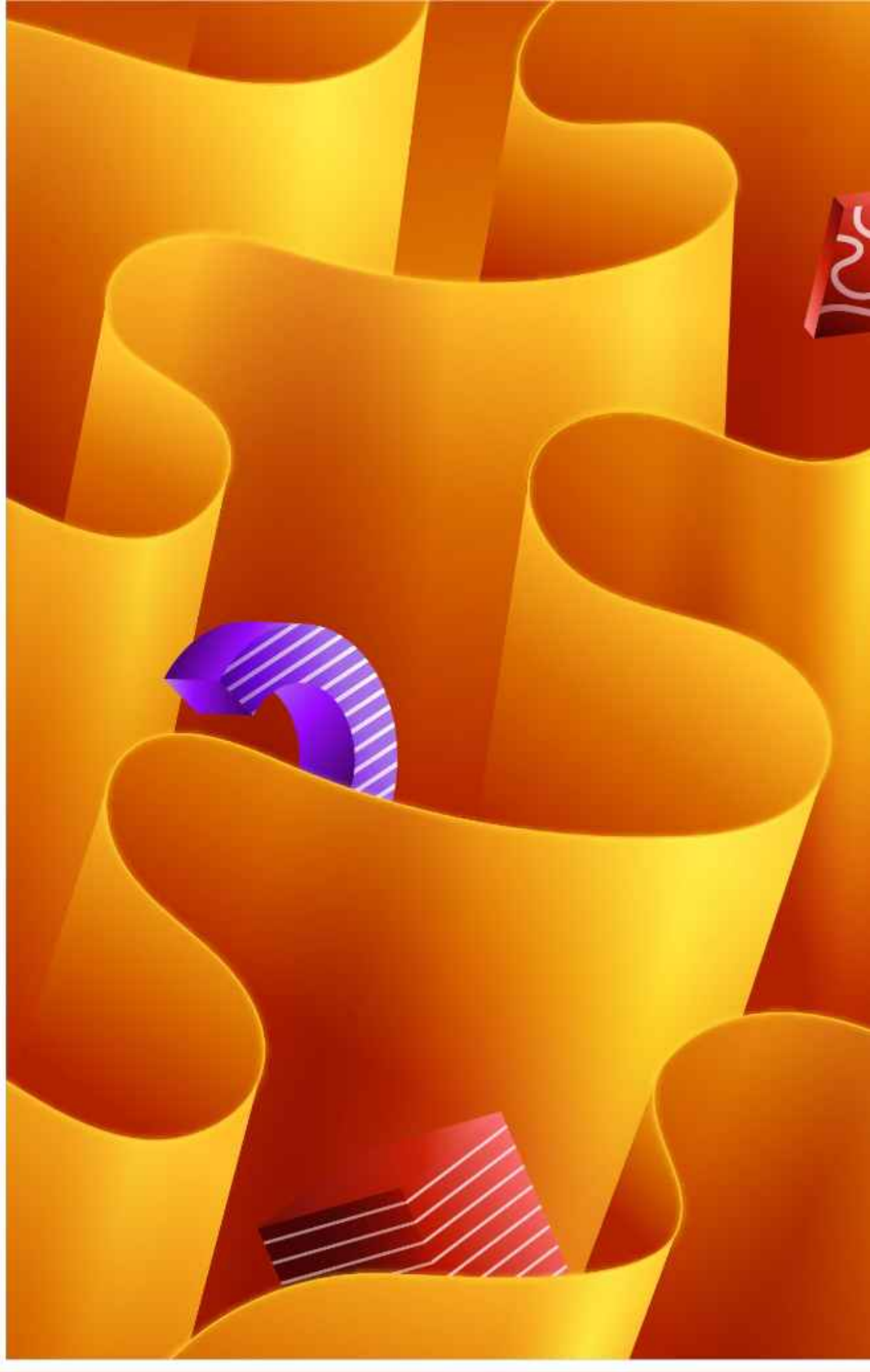


Table 3: Barriers to CPD Participation (Multiple Responses, N = 273)

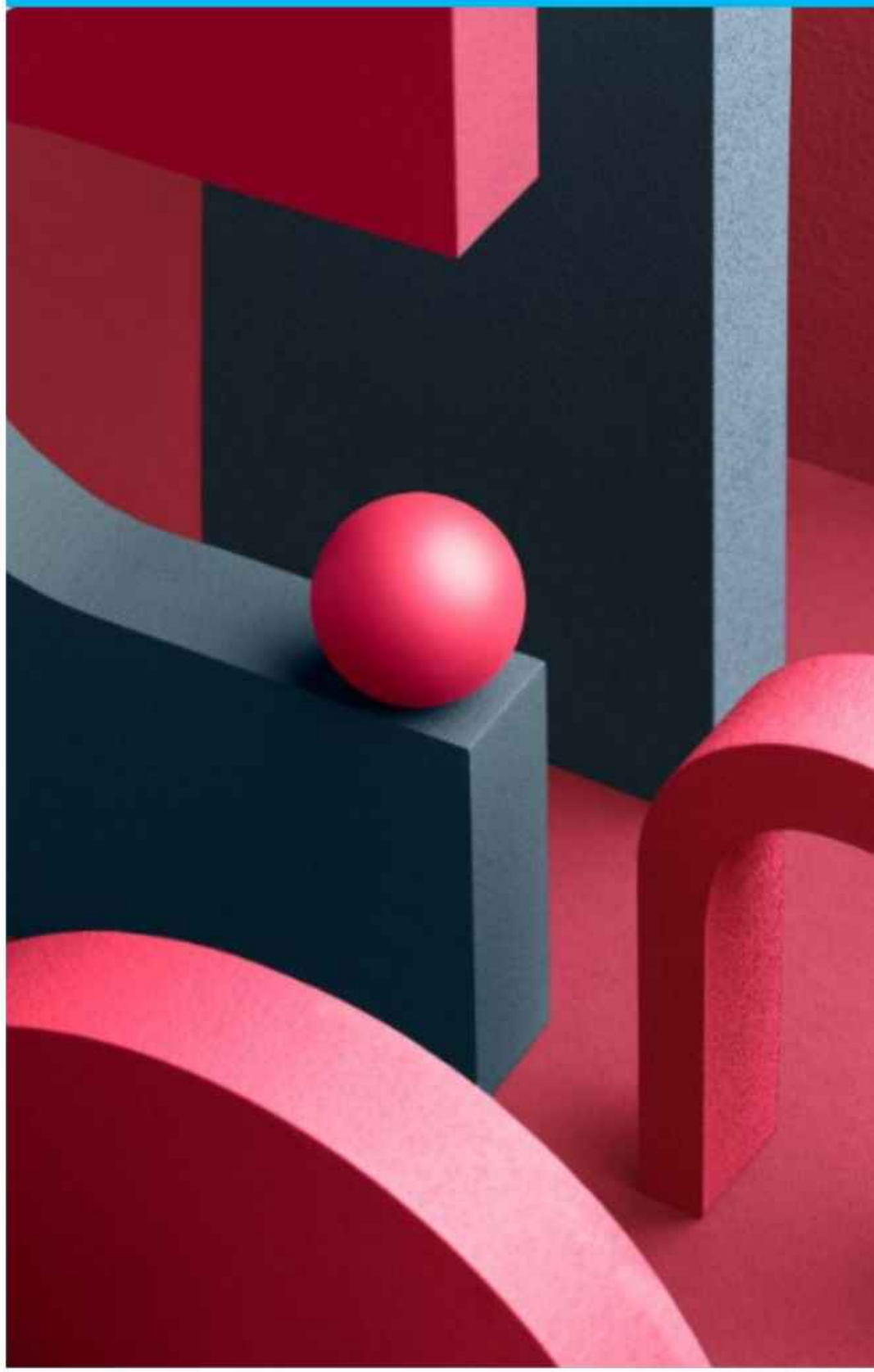
Barrier	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cost/Financial constraints	223	81.7
Time constraints/Work schedule conflicts	175	64.1
Location/Accessibility issues	47	17.2
Lack of relevant topics	20	7.3
No significant barriers	13	4.8

Note: Percentages exceed 100% due to multiple selections. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.3 Perceptions of CPD Programme Quality, Relevance and Delivery Effectiveness

Members' perceptions of programme quality are largely positive: all nine quality dimensions assessed received above-satisfactory ratings ($M > 3.0$), and five received above-average ratings ($M \geq 4.0$) (see Figure 1). The quality of facilitators and resource persons is the highest-rated dimension ($M = 4.23$), followed by interactive delivery methods ($M = 4.07$), topic relevance ($M = 4.04$) and training materials ($M = 4.03$), indicating that the core instructional infrastructure of ICAG's CPD system is strong and that curriculum planning is broadly aligned with members' professional information needs.

A significant quality gap, however, exists in follow-up support and post-programme resources ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.99$), the lowest-rated dimension, with the high standard deviation reflecting wide variability in members' experience. Value for money ($M = 3.70$) and duration and scheduling ($M = 3.72$) also lag the other dimensions, mirroring the cost and time barriers identified in Section 3.2.2. Overall satisfaction is nonetheless high: 69.6% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied, only 5.9% are dissatisfied, and 79.5% rate their likelihood of recommending ICAG's CPD programmes at 7 or above on a ten-point scale. Taken together, these findings suggest that ICAG delivers high-quality training at the point of delivery, but that effectiveness is constrained after the event, where follow-up, affordability and scheduling determine whether learning endures and spreads.



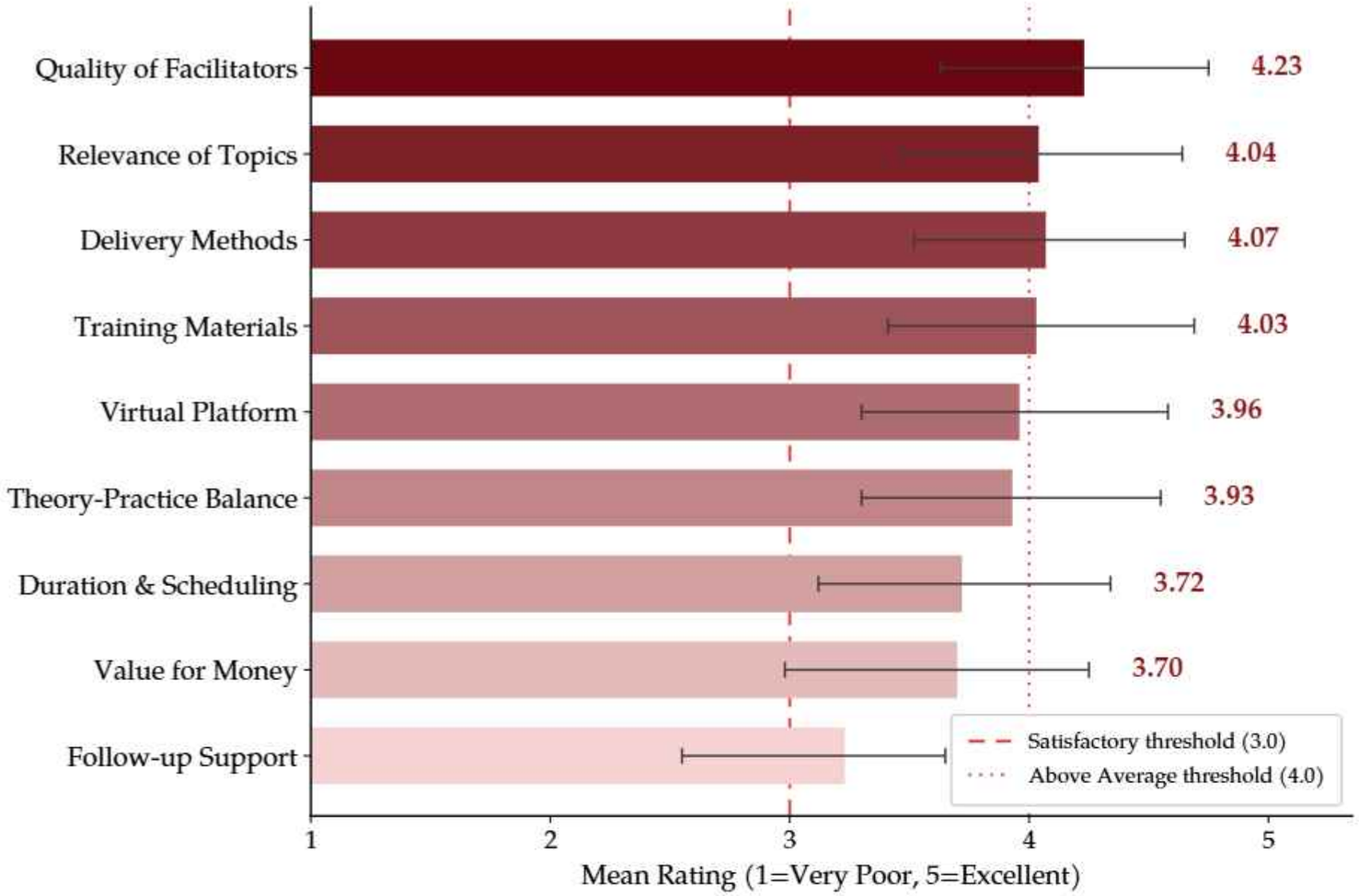


Figure 1: Chartered Accountants' Perceptions of CPD Programme Quality (N = 273). Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.4 Competency Enhancement across Technical, Digital and Professional Skill Domains

Respondents rated their competency levels before and after CPD participation across seventeen competency areas on a five-point scale, and paired-sample t-tests were used to test the statistical significance of the changes (see Table 4). The results reveal a sharply differentiated pattern across the three skill domains: consistent and highly significant gains in digital and technological competencies, mixed results in technical competencies, and statistically significant declines in self-rated professional and soft skills that are best interpreted as recalibrated self-assessment rather than skill loss.

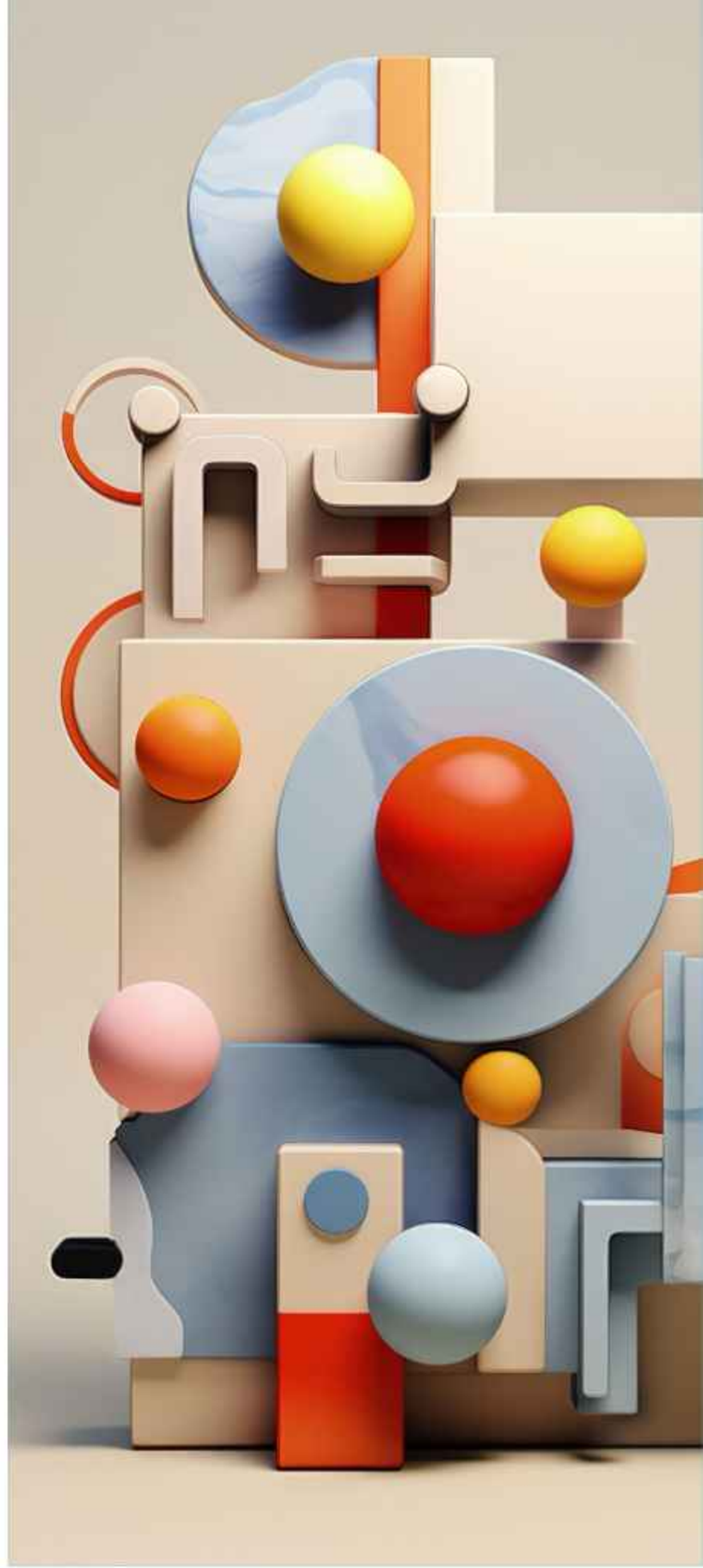


Table 4: Competency Levels Before and After CPD Participation — Paired Sample t-Test Analysis

Competency area	Before (M)	After (M)	Difference	t-value	p-value
Technical competencies					
IFRS & Financial Reporting	3.81	3.61	−0.20	3.318	.001*
Auditing & Assurance	3.72	3.63	−0.09	1.333	.184
Taxation	3.03	3.73	+0.70	11.39	<.001***
Corporate Governance & Compliance	3.60	3.74	+0.14	2.218	.028*
Risk Management & Internal Controls	4.12	4.05	−0.07	1.476	.141
Sustainability Reporting (ESG)	3.62	3.70	+0.08	2.160	.032*
Financial Management & Analysis	4.09	4.07	−0.02	0.499	.618
Digital & technological competencies					
Accounting Software & ERP Systems	3.33	4.11	+0.78	13.59	<.001***
Data Analytics & Business Intelligence	3.16	3.67	+0.51	10.02	<.001***
Digital Transformation & Emerging Tech.	3.12	3.66	+0.54	10.52	<.001***
Artificial Intelligence in Accounting	2.98	3.64	+0.66	12.85	<.001***
Cybersecurity & Data Privacy	3.01	3.74	+0.73	12.07	<.001***
Professional & soft skills					
Leadership & People Management	4.16	3.65	−0.51	9.828	<.001***
Communication & Presentation Skills	4.12	3.68	−0.44	8.579	<.001***
Strategic Thinking & Business Advisory	4.06	3.67	−0.39	9.711	<.001***
Ethics & Professional Judgment	4.23	3.62	−0.61	14.44	<.001***
Change Management & Adaptability	4.06	4.03	−0.03	0.676	.500

*Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001. Rating scale: 1 = Very Poor to 5 = Excellent. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).*

3.4.1 Technical Competencies

Within the technical domain, Taxation recorded the largest gain of the entire study (+0.70; $t = 11.39$, $p < .001$), reflecting the acute sensitivity of this domain to regulatory change in Ghana's complex tax environment and the responsiveness of CPD content to it. Corporate Governance and Compliance (+0.14, $p = .028$) and Sustainability Reporting/ESG (+0.08, $p = .032$) also improved significantly, the latter indicating that ICAG's programming has begun building competence in the areas covered by the IFRS S1 and S2 disclosure standards. The small but significant decline in IFRS and Financial Reporting (−0.20, $p = .001$) is more plausibly interpreted as post-training recalibration, whereby closer scrutiny of the standards during CPD produced more conservative self-assessments, than as actual deterioration in knowledge. No significant change occurred in Auditing and Assurance, Risk Management or Financial Management, areas in which members already rated themselves highly before CPD.

3.4.2 Digital and Technological Competencies

The digital domain shows the most consistent and statistically robust improvement of the study, with all five areas recording highly significant gains (all $p < .001$) (see Figure 2). Accounting Software and ERP Systems improved the most (+0.78), followed by Cybersecurity and Data Privacy (+0.73) and Artificial Intelligence in Accounting (+0.66). The AI result is particularly consequential: it started from the lowest pre-CPD rating of any competency assessed ($M = 2.98$), confirming a genuine pre-existing deficit, and improved substantially through CPD. These findings demonstrate that CPD is functioning as the profession's principal bridging mechanism between qualification-era training and the demands of technology-driven practice, and that members' digital skills respond strongly when relevant programming is provided.

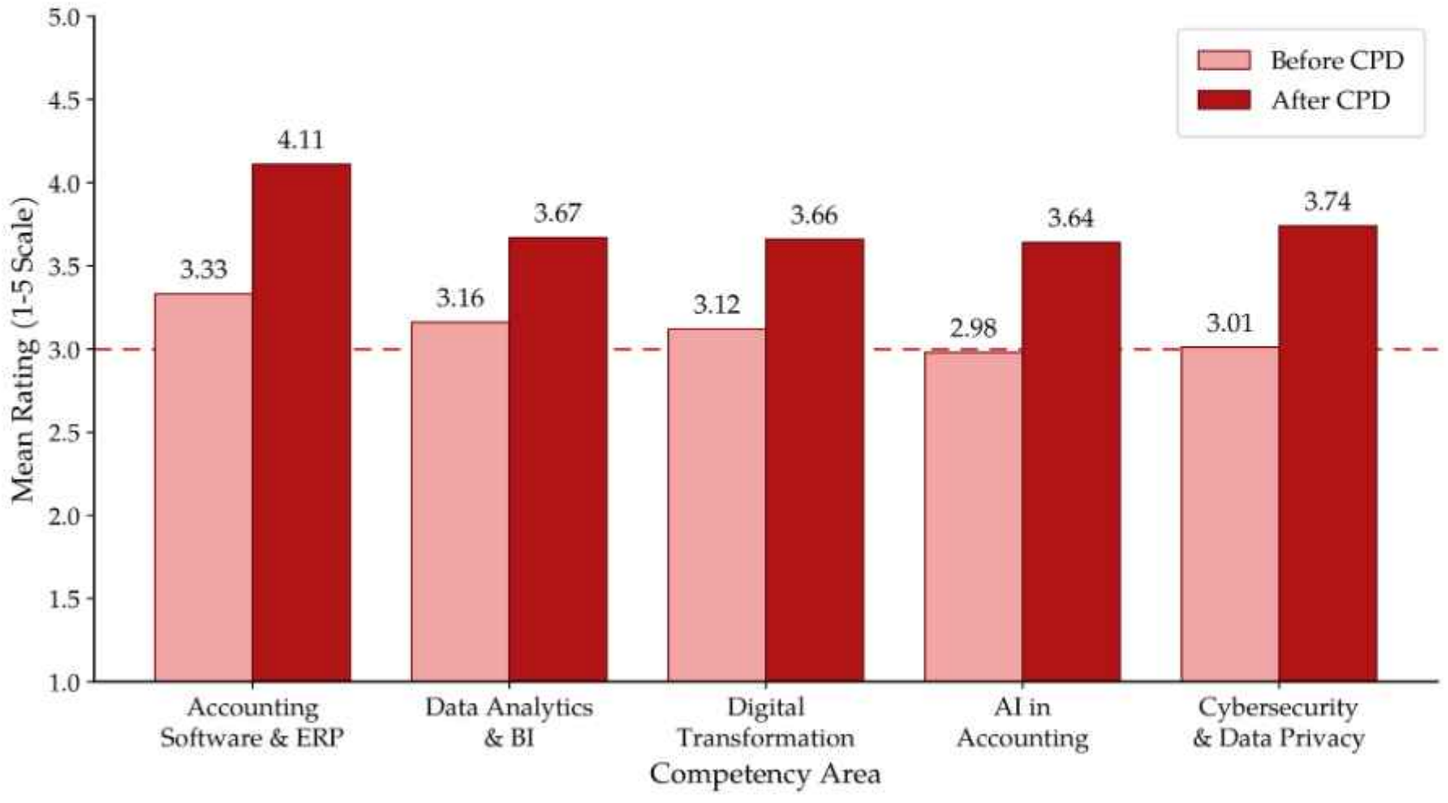


Figure 2: Digital and Technological Competency Levels Before and After CPD Participation. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.4.3 Professional and Soft Skills

The professional and soft skills domain presents the most complex findings. Four of the five skills assessed, namely Ethics and Professional Judgment (−0.61), Leadership and People Management (−0.51), Communication and Presentation Skills (−0.44) and Strategic Thinking and Business Advisory (−0.39), registered statistically significant post-CPD declines, while Change Management showed no change. The uniformly high pre-CPD self-ratings (M = 4.06 to 4.23) point to prior over-confidence in these less tangible, experientially acquired skills; exposure to best-practice standards during CPD appears to have recalibrated members' self-assessments downwards towards more realistic levels. The sharpest decline, in Ethics and Professional Judgment, suggests that ICAG's ethics content is especially effective in stimulating critical self-reflection. These results should therefore be read not as evidence of CPD ineffectiveness but as indicators of enhanced professional self-awareness, among the most valuable, if least measurable, outcomes of high-quality continuing education.

3.5 Workplace Application and Tangible Impact of CPD-Acquired Knowledge

3.5.1 Frequency of Application of CPD Knowledge

Learning transfer from ICAG's CPD programmes to the workplace is high. Two-thirds of respondents (66.3%) apply CPD-acquired knowledge frequently, including 44.0% who do so almost daily, and a further 18.7% apply it monthly, bringing the proportion of active workplace appliers to 85.0%. Only 4.4% report never applying CPD knowledge. These transfer levels exceed those reported in several comparable professional settings and provide robust evidence that programme content is relevant to members' day-to-day professional responsibilities.

Table 5: Frequency of Application of CPD Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace

Application frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Very frequently (almost daily)	120	44.0	44.0
Frequently (weekly)	61	22.3	66.3
Occasionally (monthly)	51	18.7	85.0
Rarely (a few times a year)	27	9.9	94.9
Never	12	4.4	99.3
Not applicable to my work	2	0.7	100.0
Sustainability Reporting (ESG)	3.62	3.70	+0.08

Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.5.2 Perceived Improvements in Work Performance

Decision-making quality records the highest perceived improvement attributable to CPD (M = 3.73), followed by problem-solving abilities (M = 3.52), client and stakeholder satisfaction (M = 3.52), confidence in handling complex tasks (M = 3.51) and job performance and productivity (M = 3.38), with all five dimensions falling in the moderate-to-substantial improvement range. The prominence of decision-making and problem-solving indicates that CPD is strengthening precisely the higher-order analytical and evaluative capacities that are most durable and most valuable in professional practice. The notably high standard deviations across all dimensions (all above 1.3), however, indicate that workplace impact is far from uniform, reflecting differences in job contexts, programme quality and, critically, the degree to which employers create opportunities for members to deploy new skills.

Table 6: Perceived Work Performance Improvements Attributable to CPD Participation

Performance dimension	Mean	SD
Decision-making quality	3.73	1.39
Problem-solving abilities	3.52	> 1.3
Client/stakeholder satisfaction	3.52	> 1.3
Confidence in handling complex tasks	3.51	> 1.3
Job performance and productivity	3.38	> 1.3

Note: Scale: 1 = No improvement to 5 = Significant improvement. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.5.3 Career and Professional Outcomes

The career outcomes most commonly attributed to CPD are reputational rather than financial (see Figure 3). Improved professional reputation (41.4%), recognition from management and peers (35.5%) and an expanded professional network (34.8%) lead the outcomes reported, while assignment to more complex and strategic projects (28.9%) indicates that employers are recognising and leveraging CPD-acquired competencies. Direct financial returns are rare: only 17.6% report career advancement or promotion, 13.6% report access to new job opportunities and just 3.7% report a salary increase, consistent with international evidence that financial rewards from professional development lag competency gains and depend on organisational remuneration structures. Of concern, 27.1% of respondents report no tangible career outcome at all, a pattern that may reflect minimal engagement, compliance-driven attendance, or employment in organisations that do not reward CPD investment, and which warrants further institutional attention.

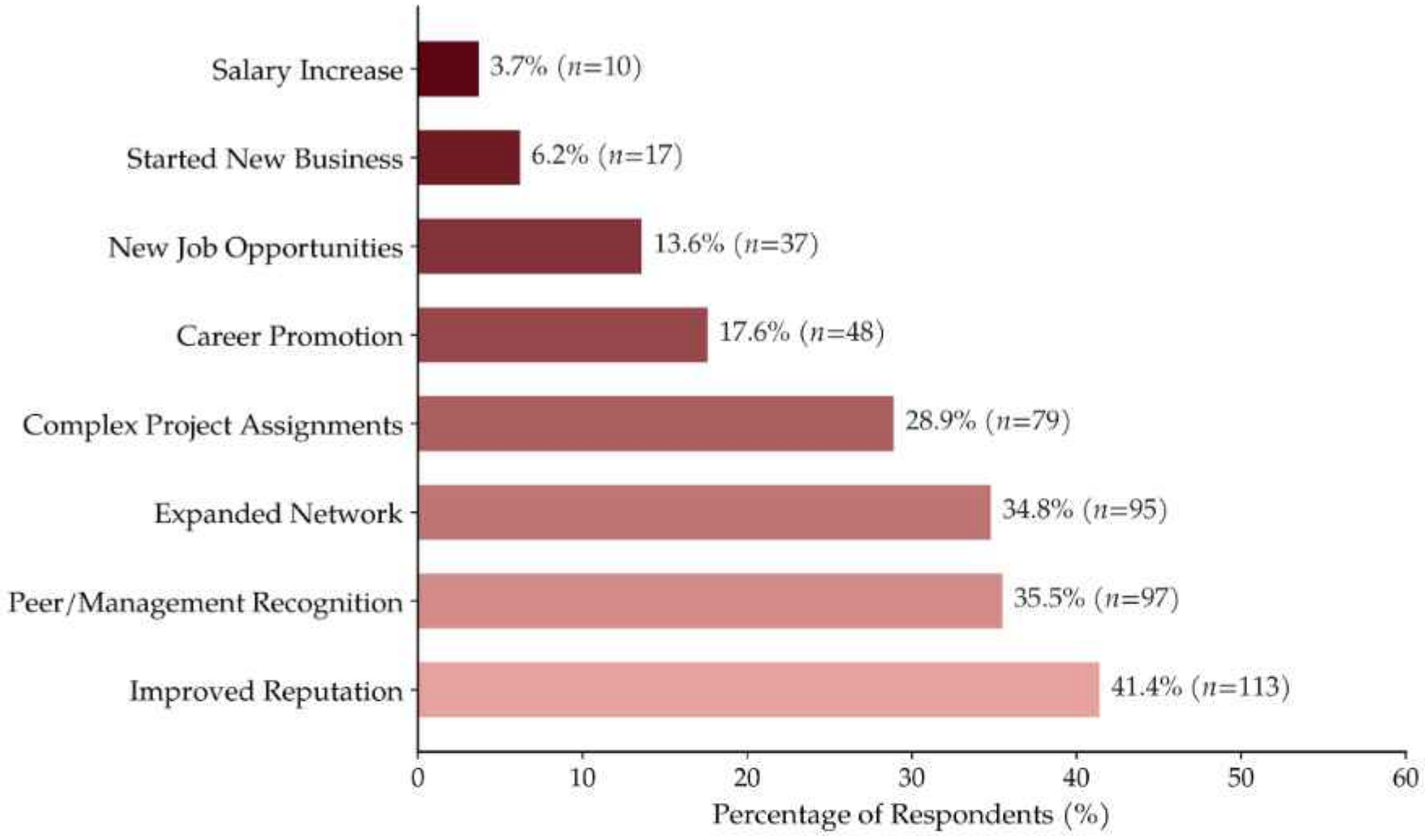


Figure 3: Career and Professional Outcomes Attributed to CPD Participation. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.6 Inferential Analysis: What Drives Competency Outcomes

Pearson's correlation analysis reveals that CPD programme quality is significantly and positively correlated with both workplace impact ($r = .315$, $p < .001$) and overall competency level ($r = .251$, $p < .001$), and that workplace impact is in turn positively correlated with competency level ($r = .313$, $p < .001$), indicating that the active translation of learning into practice is an important mechanism through which competency gains are consolidated. The single most consequential finding of the study, however, is the absence of any relationship between CPD attendance frequency and competency level ($r = .031$, $p = .621$).

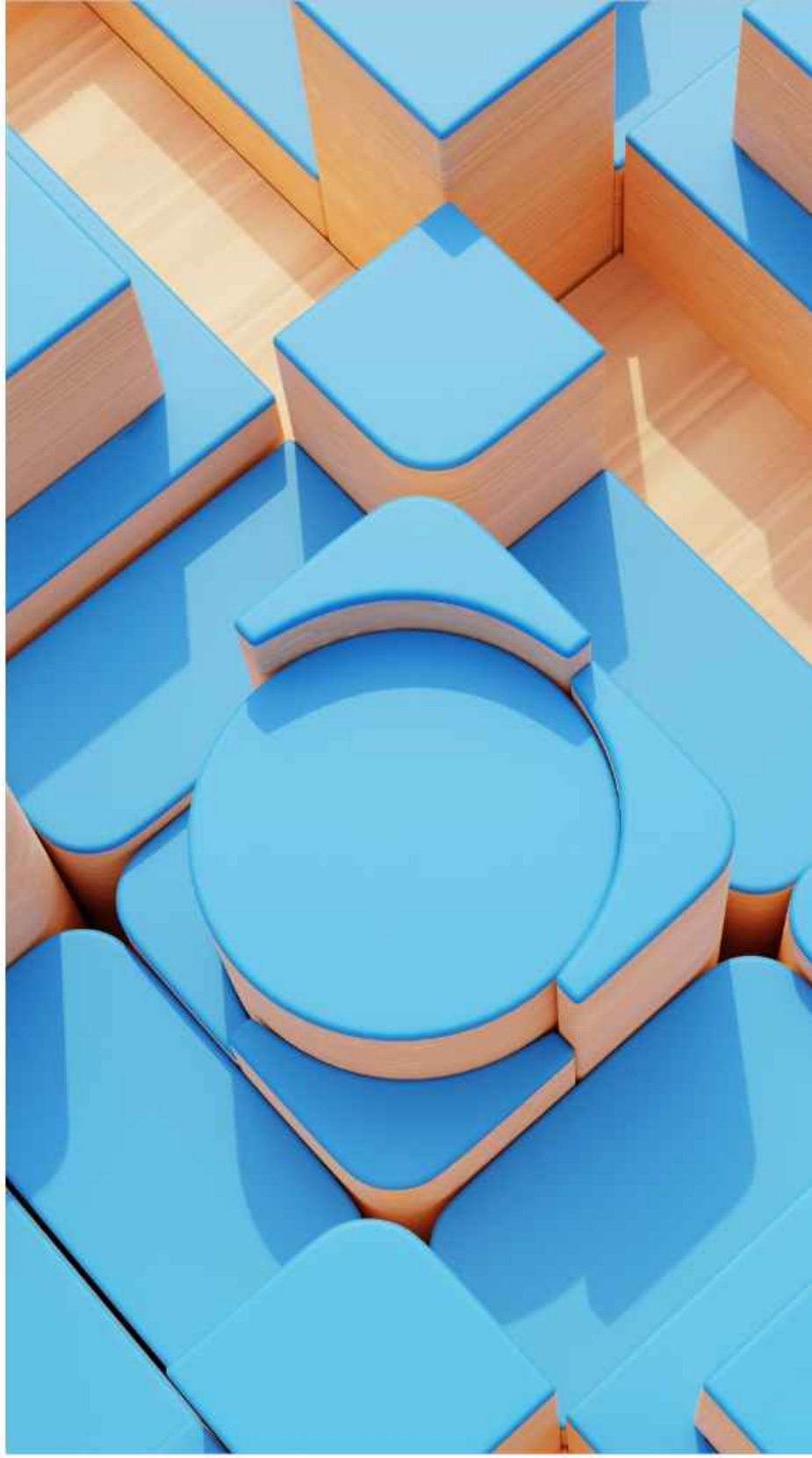


Table 7: Pearson's Correlation Matrix for Key Study Variables

Relationship	r	p-value	n
CPD programme quality ⊕ Workplace impact	.315	<.001***	207
CPD programme quality ⊕ Competency level	.251	<.001***	270
Workplace impact ⊕ Competency level	.313	<.001***	205
CPD frequency ⊕ Competency level	.031	.621 (ns)	255

*Note: *** p < .001; ns = not significant. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).*

Multiple regression analysis confirms this pattern: with post-CPD competency as the dependent variable, programme quality is the only significant predictor (β = .245, p < .001), while CPD frequency is not (β = .006, p = .621). It is the quality of programme delivery, not the quantity of hours attended, that drives competency enhancement, a finding that directly challenges the input-based hour-counting model on which ICAG's current CPD compliance framework, like that of most professional bodies, is built, and which provides empirical support in the Ghanaian context for the outcomes-based approach envisaged by International Education Standard 7.

One-way ANOVA reveals no statistically significant differences in post-CPD competency across position levels (F = 1.355, p = .241) or years of professional experience (F = 2.263, p = .063), and an independent-samples t-test reveals no significant gender difference (Male M = 3.80; Female M = 3.71; t = 1.088, p = .278). These results indicate that ICAG's CPD portfolio delivers broadly equal value to members across hierarchical levels, career stages and genders, although the marginal experience effect, driven by the strong performance of members with 16–20 years of experience (M = 4.00), and the small female subsample (n = 45) both merit exploration with larger samples.

Table 8: Post-CPD Competency by Position Level and Professional Experience (One-Way ANOVA)

Group	n	Mean	SD	Test result
Position level				F = 1.355, p = .241
Junior staff	14	3.59	0.58	
Senior staff	115	3.79	0.53	
Manager/Assistant Manager	54	3.75	0.51	
Senior Manager	55	3.91	0.46	
Partner/Director/C-Suite	16	3.62	0.64	
Self-employed/Sole practitioner	16	3.75	0.49	
Professional experience				F = 2.263, p = .063
Less than 5 years	100	3.70	0.50	
5–10 years	83	3.84	0.47	
11–15 years	45	3.72	0.58	
16–20 years	23	4.00	0.61	
Over 20 years	19	3.86	0.50	

Note: Gender t-test: Male M = 3.80, Female M = 3.71, t = 1.088, p = .278, not significant. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.7 Priority Competency Gaps and Future CPD Needs

3.7.1 Priority CPD Topic Areas

Artificial Intelligence and Automation is the most urgently prioritised future CPD topic, selected by 76.2% of respondents, followed by Advanced IFRS and Financial Reporting (68.9%), Data Analytics and Visualisation (67.8%), and Sustainability/ESG Reporting and Taxation (63.7% each) (see Figure 4). The AI result converges precisely with the competency analysis in Section 3.4.2, where AI applications recorded the lowest pre-CPD rating of any competency assessed: members are not anticipating a distant future need but identifying a present skill shortage they recognise and want to remedy. The strong demand for advanced IFRS reflects the rapid pace of standard amendments, while the prominence of sustainability reporting aligns with the introduction of the IFRS S1 and S2 disclosure standards, which will become integral to members' work. Collectively, the top five priorities reveal a membership with a decisively forward-looking orientation, seeking CPD that bridges the gap between qualification-era training and technology- and sustainability-driven practice.

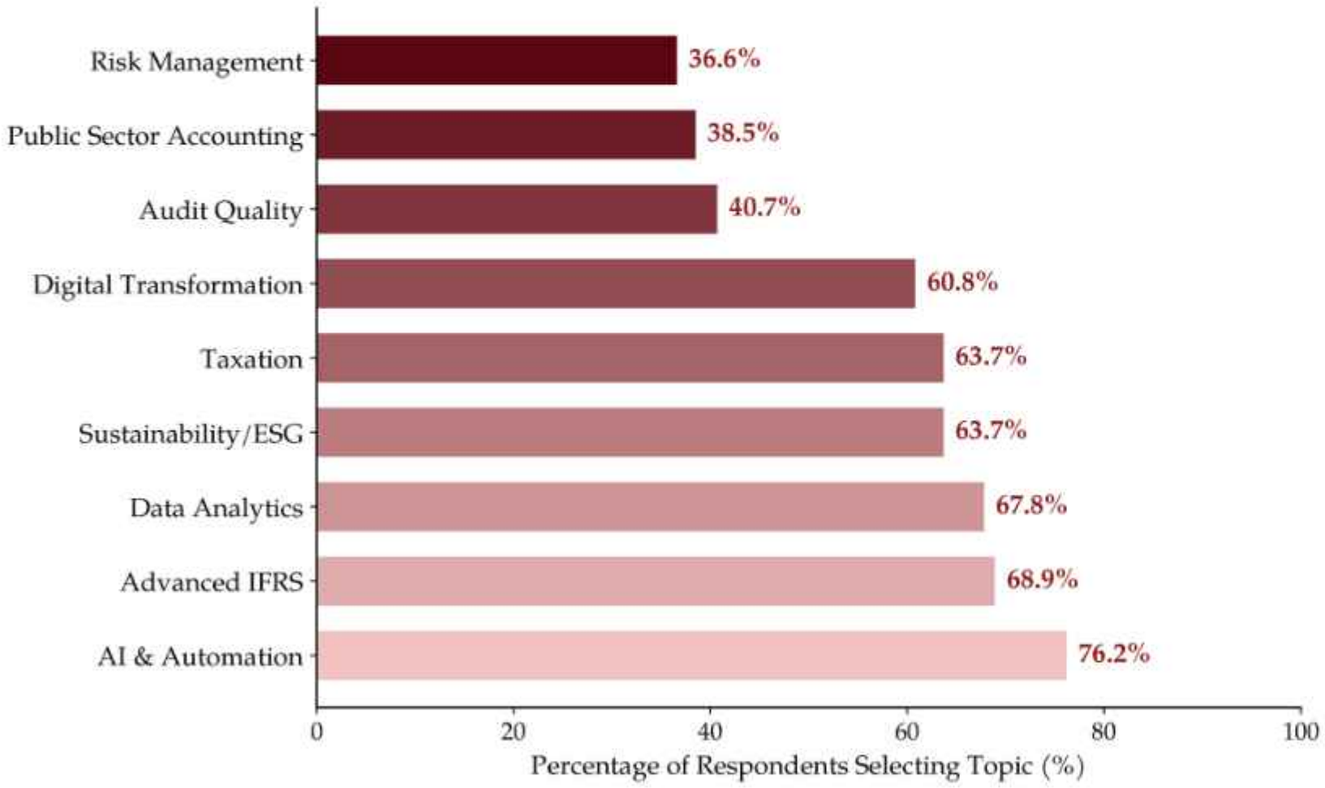


Figure 4: Priority CPD Topic Areas Identified by Respondents. Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.7.2 Preferred CPD Delivery Formats and Scheduling

Members' delivery preferences point overwhelmingly towards shorter, more flexible formats. Half-day sessions of three to four hours are the most popular format (34.1%), followed by series of shorter sessions spread over weeks (25.3%) and weekend programmes (20.9%); together these three shorter formats account for 80.3% of all preferences, while only 5.5% prefer full-day sessions. Regarding scheduling, Saturday mornings (24.9%) and weekday evenings (20.9%) are the most preferred slots, jointly accounting for 45.8% of preferences. This pronounced preference for short-form, out-of-hours delivery directly corroborates the time-constraint barrier identified in Section 3.2.2 and indicates that a predominantly weekday-daytime CPD calendar is structurally misaligned with members' professional schedules.

Table 9: Preferred CPD Session Duration and Scheduling

Category	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Session duration	Half-day (3–4 hours)	93	34.1
	Series of shorter sessions over weeks	69	25.3
	Weekend programmes	57	20.9
	Two-day intensive	21	7.7
	No preference	18	6.6
	Full-day (6–8 hours)	15	5.5
Preferred timing	Saturday mornings	68	24.9
	Weekday evenings	57	20.9
	Weekday afternoons	50	18.3
	Weekday mornings	46	16.8
	No preference	28	10.3
	Saturday afternoons	24	8.8

Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

3.8 Integrated Synthesis of Findings

Read together, the findings converge on a coherent account of ICAG's CPD system. The Institute delivers high-quality training at the point of delivery: facilitators, content relevance, delivery methods and materials all score highly, satisfaction is strong, and learning transfer to the workplace is exceptional, with 85% of members actively applying what they learn. That quality is producing real competency gains where content matches genuine deficits, most visibly across the entire digital domain and in taxation, the areas in which pre-CPD competence was weakest and regulatory or technological change is fastest.

The system's weaknesses lie not in the classroom but around it. Effectiveness is constrained after delivery by the absence of follow-up infrastructure, the lowest-rated quality dimension and, according to the training-transfer literature, one of the strongest determinants of whether learning is applied; before delivery by cost and scheduling barriers that fall hardest on the members with the least financial and temporal slack, creating an equity problem within a mandatory requirement; and structurally by a compliance framework that counts hours even though hours demonstrably do not predict competence, while programme quality does. The declining self-ratings in professional and soft skills, properly understood as recalibration, further indicate that members most need experiential, reflective formats, such as mentoring, simulation and case-based learning, in precisely the domains where conventional seminar delivery is least suited.

The reform agenda that follows is therefore not about fixing broken programmes; it is about rebuilding the framework around demonstrably good programmes, by verifying outcomes rather than attendance, investing in post-training follow-up, aligning pricing and scheduling with members' realities, and concentrating new content on the AI, analytics and sustainability competencies members have clearly identified as most urgent.

INTEGRATED SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

A coherent account of ICAG's CPD system based on evidence from members and facilitators

STRENGTHS: HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING AT THE POINT OF DELIVERY

ICAG delivers high-quality CPD programmes across all key dimensions. Members are satisfied, learn, and apply what they learn.

Facilitators	Content Relevance	Delivery Methods	Materials & Resources	Overall Satisfaction
4.58/5	4.60/5	4.45/5	4.41/5	4.55/5
(Excellent)	(Excellent)	(Excellent)	(Excellent)	(Excellent)

LEARNING TRANSFER IS EXCEPTIONAL

of members actively apply what they learn at work.

REAL IMPACT: COMPETENCY GAINS WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

CPD is delivering real competency improvement in areas of greatest need and rapid change.

DIGITAL DOMAIN (All Areas)

Largest competency gains across cybersecurity, data analytics, digital literacy, AI and emerging technologies.

TAXATION

Significant competency gains in taxation, aligned with dynamic regulatory change.

IMPORTANT INSIGHT: RECALIBRATION, NOT DECLINE

Declining self-ratings in professional and soft skills reflect recalibration—members are becoming more critical of their own competence as they learn more.

WHAT MEMBERS NEED MOST

Experiential, reflective learning formats—mentoring, simulation and case-based learning.

FOCUS AREAS

Precisely in the domains where conventional seminar delivery is least suited: professional and soft skills.

WEAKNESSES: THE SYSTEM'S CONSTRAINTS LIE AROUND THE CLASSROOM

1. AFTER DELIVERY: LACK OF FOLLOW-UP INFRASTRUCTURE

Follow-up support is the lowest-rated quality dimension.

- Training-transfer literature shows follow-up is one of the strongest determinants of whether learning is applied.

2. BEFORE DELIVERY: COST AND SCHEDULING BARRIERS

High training fees and inconvenient schedules limit access, especially for members with the least financial and temporal slack.

- Creates an equity problem within a mandatory requirement.

3. STRUCTURAL: COMPLIANCE OVER COMPETENCE

The current framework counts hours, not outcomes.

- Hours demonstrably do not predict competence, while programme quality does.

THE REFORM AGENDA: REBUILD THE FRAMEWORK AROUND DEMONSTRABLY GOOD PROGRAMMES

1. VERIFY OUTCOMES, NOT ATTENDANCE

- Shift from counting CPD hours to assessing competence.
- Use pre/post assessments, reflective activities and practical applications as evidence.

2. INVEST IN POST-TRAINING FOLLOW-UP

- Establish structured follow-up support (coaching, Q&A sessions, communities of practice).
- Reinforce learning transfer and sustain behaviour change.

3. ALIGN PRICING AND SCHEDULING WITH MEMBER REALITIES

- Offer more affordable pricing tiers and flexible payment options.
- Provide more sessions at convenient times and through blended/online modes.

4. FOCUS CONTENT ON FUTURE-READY COMPETENCIES

- Prioritise AI, data analytics, digital transformation and sustainability.
- Build the competencies members have identified as most urgent.

THE BOTTOM LINE

ICAG's CPD programmes are high-quality and impactful. The opportunity is to strengthen the system around them—by measuring outcomes, supporting application, removing barriers and future-proofing content—to create a more effective, equitable and future-ready CPD ecosystem.

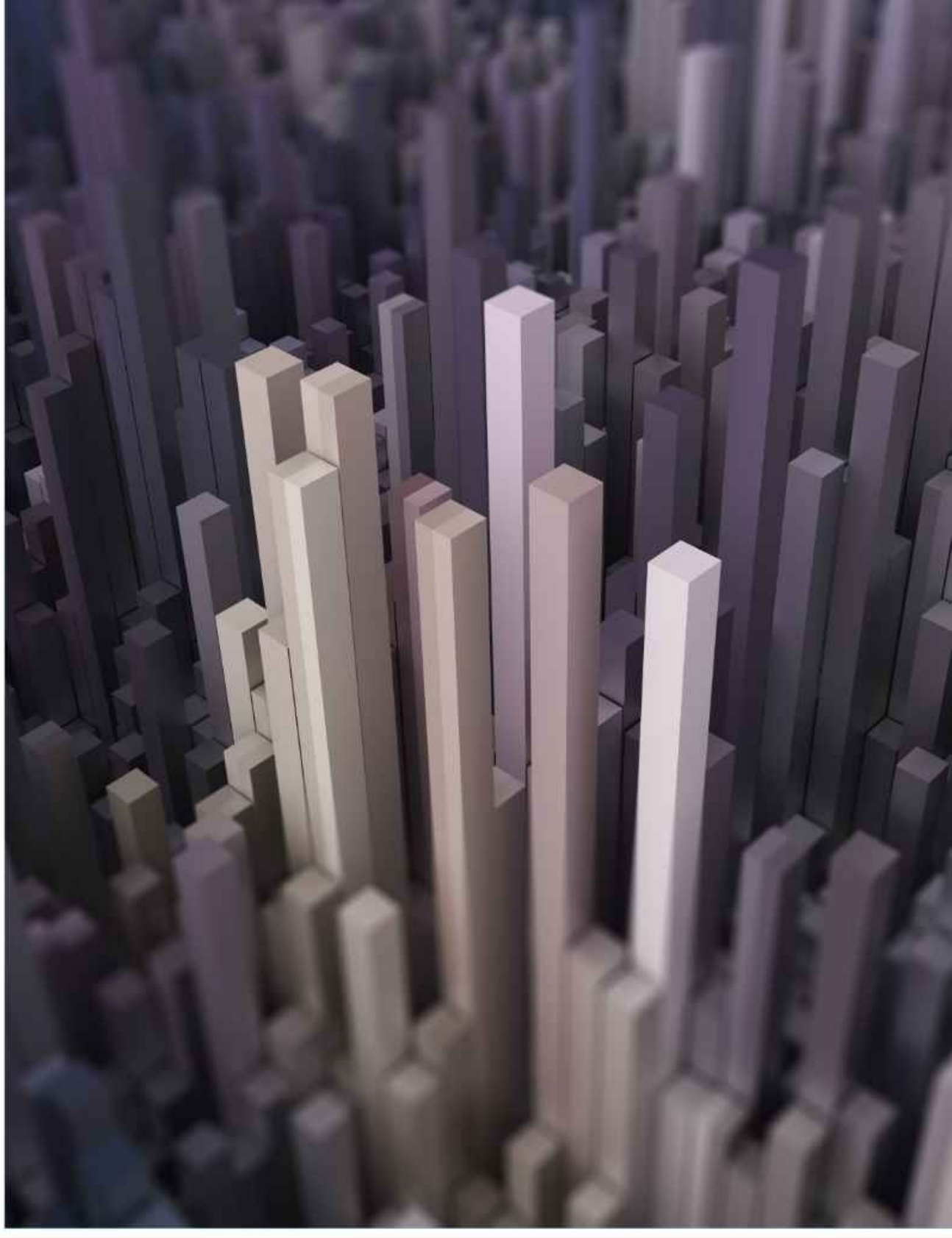
- Stronger Competence Gains
- Better Learning Transfer
- Greater Equity of Access
- A Future-Ready Profession

4. CONCLUSION

The evidence from 273 chartered accountants converges on a clear conclusion: ICAG's CPD programmes are effective, but unevenly so, and their effectiveness is governed by quality rather than quantity. The clearest evidence of effectiveness lies in the digital domain, where all five competency areas recorded large, consistent and highly significant gains, and in taxation, which recorded the largest single improvement of the study. Members apply what they learn: 85% actively deploy CPD-acquired knowledge in their work, with decision-making and problem-solving improving most. The apparent declines in self-rated professional and soft skills are best understood as healthy recalibration following exposure to professional benchmarks, an indicator of deepened self-awareness rather than skill loss.

Structural issues nonetheless constrain the system's full potential. The complete absence of a relationship between CPD attendance frequency and competency, alongside the significant positive effect of programme quality, demonstrates that the hour-counting compliance model measures the wrong thing. Cost, cited as a barrier by more than four in five members, and scheduling conflicts, cited by nearly two-thirds, interact to create an equity problem within a mandatory requirement, while weak follow-up support undermines the consolidation of learning after delivery, and more than a quarter of members report no tangible career return on their CPD investment.

Improving outcomes therefore requires coordinated institutional reform across verification, follow-up infrastructure, pricing, scheduling and curriculum priorities. The recommendations in this report provide a targeted, evidence-based framework for ICAG to address these gaps systematically, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that CPD delivers verifiable, career-long competence, and thereby sustains the credibility of the chartered accountant designation in an era of rapid professional change.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings call for coordinated institutional reform across CPD verification, post-training support, accessibility, curriculum priorities and equity. Six priority actions are proposed:

#	Recommendation	Addresses	Horizon
1	Reorient the CPD framework from input measurement to outcomes verification by introducing a portfolio-based component in which members document specific competency developments and their workplace application, operationalised through the framework in IFAC's International Education Standard 7.	CPD frequency does not predict competency; programme quality does	Medium term
2	Build post-training follow-up infrastructure as a minimum standard for every programme, including a resource database of programme materials, recommended readings and practical application guidance, together with structured follow-up surveys at 30 and 90 days.	Follow-up support as the lowest-rated quality dimension and a key inhibitor of learning transfer	Short term
3	Develop a portfolio of affordable, short-form modular learning, prioritising half-day sessions, session series and asynchronous online modules scheduled for Saturday mornings and weekday evenings, with subsidised options considered for public sector members.	Cost (81.7%) and scheduling (64.1%) as the dominant participation barriers	Short term
4	Concentrate new curriculum investment on artificial intelligence and automation, data analytics, and sustainability/ESG reporting, developed in partnership with technology providers and the Ghana Revenue Authority, alongside continued advanced IFRS programming.	Members' most urgent self-identified competency gaps and future priorities	Short term
5	Rebalance the competency framework by embedding experiential formats, including mentoring, coaching, simulations and reflective case-based learning, for professional and soft skill development in ethics, leadership, communication and strategic thinking.	Recalibrated self-assessments revealing gaps between members' skills and professional benchmarks	Medium term
6	Strengthen equity and employer engagement by collecting gender-disaggregated CPD participation data for annual review, developing provisions for members on career breaks, and issuing guidance to employers on recognising CPD within performance management and promotion systems.	Barriers to female participation and the 27.1% of members reporting no tangible career outcome	Medium term

Complementary measures raised by the evidence, namely conversion of the 24.5% of members who are neutral on satisfaction into programme advocates, longitudinal tracking of competency outcomes over time, and comparative benchmarking against other IFAC member bodies in West Africa, should be evaluated alongside these core actions.

6. REFERENCES

1. International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB). (2019). International Education Standard 7: Continuing Professional Development (Revised). New York, NY: International Federation of Accountants (IFAC).

2. Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). (2016). Professional Accountants – the Future: Drivers of Change and Future Skills. London: ACCA.

3. Lindsay, H. (2016). More than 'continuing professional development': A proposed new learning framework for professional accountants. Accounting Education, 25(1), 1–13.

4. De Lange, P., Jackling, B., & Suwardy, T. (2015). Continuing professional development in the accounting profession: Practices and perceptions from the Asia Pacific region. Accounting Education, 24(1), 41–56.

5. Paisey, C., Paisey, N. J., & Tarbert, H. (2007). Continuing professional development activities of UK accountants in public practice. Accounting Education: An International Journal, 16(4), 379–403.

6. Wessels, S. B. (2007). Accountants' perceptions of the effectiveness of mandatory continuing professional education. Accounting Education: An International Journal, 16(4), 365–378.

7. Schwab, K. (2016). The Fourth Industrial Revolution. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

8. Kroon, N., Alves, M. do C., & Martins, I. (2021). The impacts of emerging technologies on accountants' role and skills: Connecting to open innovation – a systematic literature review. Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7(3), 163.

9. International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). (2023). IFRS S1 General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information. London: IFRS Foundation.

10. International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). (2023). IFRS S2 Climate-related Disclosures. London: IFRS Foundation.

11. Rothwell, A., & Herbert, I. (2007). Accounting professionals and CPD: Attitudes and engagement – some survey evidence. Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 12(1), 121–138.

12. Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2006). Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

13. Baldwin, T. T., & Ford, J. K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. Personnel Psychology, 41(1), 63–105.

14. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

15. Yamane, T. (1967). Statistics: An Introductory Analysis (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.

16. Field, A. (2018). Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics (5th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Accountancy House, off Trinity Avenue, Okponglo East Legon, Accra

054 433 6701 /2 | 027 78014 22/3/4

P.O.Box GP 4268 Accra, Ghana

Digital Address: GA - 416 - 9906

www.icagh.org