

IFRS INTERPRETATIONS COMMITTEE – AGENDA REJECTIONS (MARCH 2015) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING BULLETIN 2015/07



Background

This Bulletin summarises issues that the IFRS Interpretations Committee (the Interpretations Committee) decided not to take onto its agenda at its March 2015 meeting, which were reported in its public newsletter (the IFRIC Update). Although these agenda rejections do not represent authoritative guidance issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), in practice they are regarded as being highly persuasive. All entities that report in accordance with IFRS need to be aware of these agenda rejections, and may need to modify their accounting approach. More detailed background about agenda rejections is set out below.

The Interpretations Committee is the interpretative body of the IASB. The role of the Interpretations Committee is to provide guidance on financial reporting issues which have been identified and which are not specifically addressed in IFRS, or where unsatisfactory or conflicting interpretations either have developed, or appear likely to develop.

Any party which has an interest in financial reporting is encouraged to submit issues to the Interpretations Committee when it is considered to be important that the issue is addressed by either the Interpretations Committee itself, or by the IASB. When issues are raised, the Interpretations Committee normally consults a range of other parties, including national accounting standard setting bodies, other organisations involved with accounting standard setting, and securities regulators.

At each of its meetings, the Interpretations Committee considers new issues that have been raised, and decides whether they should be added to its agenda. For those issues that are not added to the agenda, a tentative agenda decision is published in the IFRIC Update newsletter which is issued shortly after each of the Interpretations Committee's meetings. These tentative agenda decisions are open to public comment for a period of 60 days, after which point they are taken back to the Interpretations Committee for further consideration in the light of any comment letters which have been received and further analysis carried out by the Staff. The tentative agenda decision is then either confirmed and reported in the next IFRIC Update, or the issue is either subjected to further consideration by the Interpretations Committee's agenda or referred to the IASB.

Interpretations Committee agenda decisions do not represent authoritative guidance. However, they do set out the Interpretations Committee's rationale for not taking an issue onto its agenda (or referring it to the IASB). It is noted on the IFRS Foundation's website that they 'should be seen as helpful, informative and persuasive'. In practice, it is expected that entities reporting in accordance with IFRS will take account of and follow the agenda decisions and this is the approach which is followed by securities regulators worldwide.

STATUS

Final

EFFECTIVE DATE

Immediate

ACCOUNTING IMPACT

Clarification of IFRS requirements.
May lead to changes in practice.

Agenda decisions that were finalised at the March 2015 meeting

- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: the assessment of 'other facts and circumstances'*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: application of 'other facts and circumstances' to specific fact patterns*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: consideration of two joint arrangements with similar features that are classified differently*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operator: recognition of revenue by a joint operator*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operator: the accounting treatment when the joint operator's share of output purchased differs from its share of ownership interest in the joint operation*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting in separate financial statements: accounting by the joint operator in its separate financial statements*
- IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operation: accounting by the joint operation that is a separate vehicle in its financial statements*
- IAS 12 Income Taxes – Selection of applicable tax rate for the measurement of deferred tax relating to an investment in an associate*
- IAS 19 Employee Benefits – Should longevity swaps held under a defined benefit plan be measured as a plan asset at fair value or on another basis as a 'qualifying insurance policy'?*

Each of these is discussed below, split between those which are expected to have wide application and those which are narrower in focus.

Tentative agenda decisions at the March 2015 meeting

No tentative agenda decisions were published.

Agenda decisions at the March 2015 meeting – wide application***IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: the assessment of 'other facts and circumstances'***

The Interpretations Committee was asked to clarify the assessment of 'other facts and circumstances' with regard to the classification of a joint arrangement as either a joint operation or a joint venture in accordance with IFRS 11.17. Consideration was given to whether the assessment should only focus on whether those facts and circumstances create enforceable rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities of the joint arrangement, or whether it should also consider:

- The design and purpose of the joint arrangement
- The entity's business needs and
- The entity's past practices.

The Interpretations Committee noted that the initial assessment of whether a joint arrangement gives rise to a joint operation or a joint venture focusses on whether the parties to the joint arrangement have enforceable rights to assets and obligations for the liabilities. The assessment of 'other facts and circumstances' is made when no contractual arrangement exists to reverse or modify the rights and obligations conferred by the legal form of the separate vehicle. The assessment therefore focuses on whether enforceable rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities have been established through the other facts and circumstances.

In its conclusion, the Interpretations Committee refers to paragraphs B31-B33 of IFRS 11 and concludes that a joint arrangement is classified as a joint operation through the assessment of other facts and circumstances if:

- The parties have rights and obligations relating to the economic benefits of the assets; and
- The parties provide cash to the arrangement through legal or contractual obligations, which is used to settle the liabilities of the joint arrangement on a continuous basis.

Accordingly, the assessment of 'other facts and circumstances' is a test of whether these facts and circumstances override the rights and obligations conferred by the legal form of the separate vehicle, resulting in the parties to the joint arrangement having enforceable rights to assets and obligations for liabilities. The assessment is not a test of whether parties are closely or fully involved with the operation of the separate vehicle.

Based on the existing requirements the Interpretations Committee decided not to add this issue to its agenda.

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: application of 'other facts and circumstances' to specific fact patterns

Output sold at market price

An issue was raised in which the output of the joint arrangement is required to be sold only to the parties of the joint arrangement at market rates and whether the use of market rates prevents the joint arrangement from being classified as a joint operation. This is because the market price of output could fall to the extent that the income received by the joint arrangement might not be sufficient for it to settle all of its obligations.

The Interpretations Committee clarified that a sale at market price to the other parties is not determinative on its own. Instead it would be necessary to consider, among other things, whether the cash flows provided through the transaction would be sufficient to enable the joint arrangement to settle its liabilities on a continuous basis.

Consequently, in these circumstances, judgement is required in determining whether the arrangement is a joint operation or a joint venture.

Financing from a third party

The Interpretations Committee discussed whether financing provided by a third party would prevent a joint arrangement from being classified as a joint operation.

It was noted that it would be necessary to assess whether the cash flows from the sale of the output to the parties to the joint arrangement would ultimately be required in order to fund the repayment of the external financing. If so, the third-party financing alone would not affect the classification of the joint arrangement.

Nature of output

The Interpretations Committee discussed whether the nature of the output (fungible or bespoke) produced by a joint arrangement determines its classification.

The Interpretations Committee noted that the nature of the output is not determinative of its classification. Additionally, it was noted that the focus on obligations for the liabilities in IFRS 11 is on the existence of cash flows flowing between the parties and the joint operation as a consequence of the rights to the assets and obligations for the assets of the joint arrangement regardless of the nature of the product.

The basis of 'substantially all of the output'

A further question was in respect of the basis for determining whether the parties to the joint arrangement are taking 'substantially all of the output'. More specifically the question was whether the basis for determination should be based either on:

- Volumes of output; or
- Monetary value of output.

The Interpretations Committee noted that the assessment needs to be based on the monetary value of the output and not on its physical quantities. In doing so, it referred to IFRS 11.B31-B32 and noted that in order to meet the criteria for classifying the joint arrangement as a joint operation through 'other facts and circumstances':

- The parties need to have rights to substantially all of the economic benefits of the assets of the joint arrangement and have obligations to acquire those economic benefits and
- The joint arrangement needs to be able to settle its liabilities from the cash flows received as a consequence of the parties' rights to those economic benefits, along with any other funding obligations that the parties have.

Due to the existing IFRS requirements, the Interpretations Committee decided not to add these issues to its agenda.

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Classification of joint arrangements: consideration of two joint arrangements with similar features that are classified differently

Questions were raised about circumstances in which two joint arrangements are basically the same, with the only difference being that one of them has been structured through a separate vehicle and one has not, and whether this might result in a different classification. It was suggested that this could arise for the following reasons:

- For a joint arrangement structured through a separate legal entity, the legal form of the joint arrangement must be overridden by other contracts or other facts and circumstances in order for it to be classified as a joint operation; but
- A joint arrangement which is not structured through a separate vehicle is always classified as a joint operation.

The Interpretations Committee confirmed that there might be cases where the structuring of a joint arrangement through a separate vehicle would result in a different classification conclusion, because the legal form often affects the rights and obligations of the parties to the joint arrangement. It was further noted that this does not conflict with the concept of economic substance, because economic substance requires the classification to be made based on the rights and obligations of the parties. A separate vehicle can play a significant role in the assessment of the rights and obligations of the parties to a joint arrangement.

Because existing IFRS requirements are sufficient to enable an entity to carry out this analysis, the Interpretations Committee decided not to add this item to its agenda.

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operator: recognition of revenue by a joint operator

IFRS 11.20(d) requires a joint operator to recognise revenue in respect of its share of revenue from the sale of the output by a joint operation. This raised the question of whether a joint operator should recognise revenue in relation to its share of the output purchased from the joint operation.

The Interpretations Committee noted that the issue relates to the application of paragraph 20(d) of IFRS 11 and that it would not result in the recognition of revenue by a joint operator when it purchases output from the joint operation because it would be selling output to itself. If the joint operators purchase all of the output from the joint operation, they would recognise 'their revenue' only when they sell the output to third parties.

Due to the existing IFRS requirements, the Interpretations Committee decided not to add this issue to its agenda.

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operator: the accounting treatment when the joint operator's share of output purchased differs from its share of ownership interest in the joint operation

In some situations, a joint operator's share of the output purchased might differ from its share of ownership interest in the joint operation. The Interpretations Committee was asked whether the joint operator's share of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenses should be based on:

- The percentage of ownership of the legal entity; or
- The percentage of output purchased.

The Interpretations Committee noted that there are various factors that might need to be considered. These include, for example, varying shares of output purchased by each entity over time and the time period to consider in assessing the share of output. Significant investments by the joint operator that differ from the ownership interest might explain the difference in the share of ownership and share of output, as might other features of the arrangement.

Due to the various possible scenarios, it was noted that it is important to understand each the nature of each case to understand why the share of ownership interest differs from the output share purchased. Judgement would therefore be required in determining the appropriate accounting approach.

The development of additional guidance on this issue would require a broader analysis than could be achieved by the Interpretations Committee and was therefore not added to its agenda.

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements – Accounting in separate financial statements: accounting by a joint operator in its separate financial statements

The Interpretations Committee was asked how a joint operator accounts for its share of assets and liabilities of a joint operation within its separate financial statements when the joint operation is structured through a separate vehicle.

IFRS 11.26 requires a joint operator to account for its rights and obligations in relation to the joint operation and those rights and obligations are the same whether separate or consolidated financial statements are prepared. Consequently, the same accounting needs to be applied in the consolidated and separate financial statements of an entity. The joint operator would not account in its separate financial statements for its shareholding in the vehicle.

Based on the existing IFRS requirements the Interpretations Committee decided not to add this issue to its agenda.

IFRS 11 *Joint Arrangements – Accounting by the joint operation: accounting by the joint operation that is a separate vehicle in its financial statements*

The recognition of assets and liabilities by joint operators in consolidated and separate financial statements raised the question as to whether those assets and liabilities should also be recognised in financial statements of the joint operation itself.

The Interpretations Committee noted that IFRS 11 is only applicable to the accounting by the joint operators and not to the accounting by the separate vehicle. Instead the financial statements of an entity are prepared in accordance with the applicable standards. However, it was also noted that it would be important to understand the joint operators' rights and obligations in respect of those assets and liabilities, and how those rights and obligations affect the related assets and liabilities.

In the light of the existing IFRS guidance, the Interpretations Committee did not add the issue to its agenda.

IAS 12 *Income Taxes – Selection of applicable tax rate for the measurement of deferred tax relating to an investment in an associate*

The Interpretations Committee was asked to clarify which tax rate would need to be used for the measurement of deferred taxes relating to an investment in an associate in multi-tax rate jurisdictions. Three possible situations exist of how the carrying amount of the investment might be recovered, each situation giving rise to a different tax rate:

- Dividends received
- Sale to a third party
- Liquidation and the receipt of the residual assets.

The Interpretations Committee referred to IAS 12.51A which states that an entity measures deferred taxes using the tax rate and the tax base consistent with the expected manner of recovery. If the investor considers that an investment will be recovered in more than one way and, as a result different tax rates are expected to apply, these different tax rates would also be applied for the calculation of the deferred tax in accordance with IAS 12.

Due to the fact that the Interpretations Committee has received no evidence of diversity in the application of IAS 12, and that there is sufficient existing guidance, the issue was not added to its agenda.

Agenda decisions at the March 2015 meeting – narrow application

IAS 19 *Employee Benefits – Should longevity swaps held under a defined benefit plan be measured as a plan asset at fair value or on another basis as a 'qualifying insurance policy'?*

The Interpretations Committee received a request about the measurement of longevity swaps held under a defined benefit plan. It was asked whether longevity swaps should be accounted for as


- A single instrument measured at fair value as part of plan assets (IAS 19.8 and .113; and IFRS 13) with changes recognised in other comprehensive income; or
- Split into two components with the use of another basis of measurement for a qualifying insurance policy for one of the components (IAS 19.115).

The Interpretations Committee noted that it understand that the predominant practice is to account for longevity swaps as a single instrument and to measure it at fair value as part of the plan assets by applying IAS 19.8 and .113 and IFRS 13. However, outreach indicated that there is no evidence that the use of longevity swaps is widespread.

Based on the outreach carried out, the Interpretations Committee concluded that diversity is unlikely to develop and therefore decided not to take this item to its agenda.

BDO comment

Entities in jurisdictions with various tax rates will need to give careful consideration to the way in which they expect to recover the carrying amount of the investment and whether this will be through transactions to which different tax rates apply. This might be different from current practice.



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