

UK-adopted international accounting standards

IFRIC Interpretation 14
IAS 19—The Limit on a Defined Benefit
Asset, Minimum Funding Requirements
and their Interaction

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IAS 19—The Limit on a Defined Benefit Asset, Minimum Funding Requirements and their Interaction

References

- IAS 1 *Presentation of Financial Statements*
- IAS 8 *Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors*
- IAS 19 *Employee Benefits* (as amended in 2011)
- IAS 37 *Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets*

Background

- 1 Paragraph 64 of IAS 19 limits the measurement of a net defined benefit asset to the lower of the surplus in the defined benefit plan and the asset ceiling. Paragraph 8 of IAS 19 defines the asset ceiling as ‘the present value of any economic benefits available in the form of refunds from the plan or reductions in future contributions to the plan’. Questions have arisen about when refunds or reductions in future contributions should be regarded as available, particularly when a minimum funding requirement exists.
- 2 Minimum funding requirements exist in many countries to improve the security of the post-employment benefit promise made to members of an employee benefit plan. Such requirements normally stipulate a minimum amount or level of contributions that must be made to a plan over a given period. Therefore, a minimum funding requirement may limit the ability of the entity to reduce future contributions.
- 3 Further, the limit on the measurement of a defined benefit asset may cause a minimum funding requirement to be onerous. Normally, a requirement to make contributions to a plan would not affect the measurement of the defined benefit asset or liability. This is because the contributions, once paid, will become plan assets and so the additional net liability is nil. However, a minimum funding requirement may give rise to a liability if the required contributions will not be available to the entity once they have been paid.
- 3A In November 2009 the International Accounting Standards Board amended IFRIC 14 to remove an unintended consequence arising from the treatment of prepayments of future contributions in some circumstances when there is a minimum funding requirement.

Scope

- 4 This Interpretation applies to all post-employment defined benefits and other long-term employee defined benefits.
- 5 For the purpose of this Interpretation, minimum funding requirements are any requirements to fund a post-employment or other long-term defined benefit plan.

Issues

- 6 The issues addressed in this Interpretation are:
- (a) when refunds or reductions in future contributions should be regarded as available in accordance with the definition of the asset ceiling in paragraph 8 of IAS 19.
 - (b) how a minimum funding requirement might affect the availability of reductions in future contributions.
 - (c) when a minimum funding requirement might give rise to a liability.

Consensus

Availability of a refund or reduction in future contributions

- 7 An entity shall determine the availability of a refund or a reduction in future contributions in accordance with the terms and conditions of the plan and any statutory requirements in the jurisdiction of the plan.
- 8 An economic benefit, in the form of a refund or a reduction in future contributions, is available if the entity can realise it at some point during the life of the plan or when the plan liabilities are settled. In particular, such an economic benefit may be available even if it is not realisable immediately at the end of the reporting period.
- 9 The economic benefit available does not depend on how the entity intends to use the surplus. An entity shall determine the maximum economic benefit that is available from refunds, reductions in future contributions or a combination of both. An entity shall not recognise economic benefits from a combination of refunds and reductions in future contributions based on assumptions that are mutually exclusive.
- 10 In accordance with IAS 1, the entity shall disclose information about the key sources of estimation uncertainty at the end of the reporting period that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amount of the net asset or liability recognised in the statement of financial position. This might include disclosure of any restrictions on the current realisability of the surplus or disclosure of the basis used to determine the amount of the economic benefit available.

The economic benefit available as a refund

The right to a refund

- 11 A refund is available to an entity only if the entity has an unconditional right to a refund:
- (a) during the life of the plan, without assuming that the plan liabilities must be settled in order to obtain the refund (eg in some jurisdictions, the entity may have a right to a refund during the life of the plan, irrespective of whether the plan liabilities are settled); or

- (b) assuming the gradual settlement of the plan liabilities over time until all members have left the plan; or
- (c) assuming the full settlement of the plan liabilities in a single event (ie as a plan wind-up).

An unconditional right to a refund can exist whatever the funding level of a plan at the end of the reporting period.

- 12 If the entity's right to a refund of a surplus depends on the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within its control, the entity does not have an unconditional right and shall not recognise an asset.

Measurement of the economic benefit

- 13 An entity shall measure the economic benefit available as a refund as the amount of the surplus at the end of the reporting period (being the fair value of the plan assets less the present value of the defined benefit obligation) that the entity has a right to receive as a refund, less any associated costs. For instance, if a refund would be subject to a tax other than income tax, an entity shall measure the amount of the refund net of the tax.
- 14 In measuring the amount of a refund available when the plan is wound up (paragraph 11(c)), an entity shall include the costs to the plan of settling the plan liabilities and making the refund. For example, an entity shall deduct professional fees if these are paid by the plan rather than the entity, and the costs of any insurance premiums that may be required to secure the liability on wind-up.
- 15 If the amount of a refund is determined as the full amount or a proportion of the surplus, rather than a fixed amount, an entity shall make no adjustment for the time value of money, even if the refund is realisable only at a future date.

The economic benefit available as a contribution reduction

- 16 If there is no minimum funding requirement for contributions relating to future service, the economic benefit available as a reduction in future contributions is the future service cost to the entity for each period over the shorter of the expected life of the plan and the expected life of the entity. The future service cost to the entity excludes amounts that will be borne by employees.
- 17 An entity shall determine the future service costs using assumptions consistent with those used to determine the defined benefit obligation and with the situation that exists at the end of the reporting period as determined by IAS 19. Therefore, an entity shall assume no change to the benefits to be provided by a plan in the future until the plan is amended and shall assume a stable workforce in the future unless the entity makes a reduction in the number of employees covered by the plan. In the latter case, the assumption about the future workforce shall include the reduction.

The effect of a minimum funding requirement on the economic benefit available as a reduction in future contributions

- 18 An entity shall analyse any minimum funding requirement at a given date into contributions that are required to cover (a) any existing shortfall for past service on the minimum funding basis and (b) future service.
- 19 Contributions to cover any existing shortfall on the minimum funding basis in respect of services already received do not affect future contributions for future service. They may give rise to a liability in accordance with paragraphs 23–26.
- 20 If there is a minimum funding requirement for contributions relating to future service, the economic benefit available as a reduction in future contributions is the sum of:
- (a) any amount that reduces future minimum funding requirement contributions for future service because the entity made a prepayment (ie paid the amount before being required to do so); and
 - (b) the estimated future service cost in each period in accordance with paragraphs 16 and 17, less the estimated minimum funding requirement contributions that would be required for future service in those periods if there were no prepayment as described in (a).
- 21 An entity shall estimate the future minimum funding requirement contributions for future service taking into account the effect of any existing surplus determined using the minimum funding basis but excluding the prepayment described in paragraph 20(a). An entity shall use assumptions consistent with the minimum funding basis and, for any factors not specified by that basis, assumptions consistent with those used to determine the defined benefit obligation and with the situation that exists at the end of the reporting period as determined by IAS 19. The estimate shall include any changes expected as a result of the entity paying the minimum contributions when they are due. However, the estimate shall not include the effect of expected changes in the terms and conditions of the minimum funding basis that are not substantively enacted or contractually agreed at the end of the reporting period.
- 22 When an entity determines the amount described in paragraph 20(b), if the future minimum funding requirement contributions for future service exceed the future IAS 19 service cost in any given period, that excess reduces the amount of the economic benefit available as a reduction in future contributions. However, the amount described in paragraph 20(b) can never be less than zero.

When a minimum funding requirement may give rise to a liability

- 23 If an entity has an obligation under a minimum funding requirement to pay contributions to cover an existing shortfall on the minimum funding basis in respect of services already received, the entity shall determine whether the contributions payable will be available as a refund or reduction in future contributions after they are paid into the plan.
- 24 To the extent that the contributions payable will not be available after they are paid into the plan, the entity shall recognise a liability when the obligation arises. The liability shall reduce the net defined benefit asset or increase the net defined benefit

liability so that no gain or loss is expected to result from applying paragraph 64 of IAS 19 when the contributions are paid.

25–26 [Deleted]

Effective date

- 27 An entity shall apply this Interpretation for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2008. Earlier application is permitted.
- 27A IAS 1 (as revised in 2007) amended the terminology used throughout IFRSs. In addition it amended paragraph 26. An entity shall apply those amendments for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2009. If an entity applies IAS 1 (revised 2007) for an earlier period, the amendments shall be applied for that earlier period.
- 27B *Prepayments of a Minimum Funding Requirement* added paragraph 3A and amended paragraphs 16–18 and 20–22. An entity shall apply those amendments for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2011. Earlier application is permitted. If an entity applies the amendments for an earlier period, it shall disclose that fact.
- 27C IAS 19 (as amended in 2011) amended paragraphs 1, 6, 17 and 24 and deleted paragraphs 25 and 26. An entity shall apply those amendments when it applies IAS 19 (as amended in 2011).

Transition

- 28 An entity shall apply this Interpretation from the beginning of the first period presented in the first financial statements to which the Interpretation applies. An entity shall recognise any initial adjustment arising from the application of this Interpretation in retained earnings at the beginning of that period.
- 29 An entity shall apply the amendments in paragraphs 3A, 16–18 and 20–22 from the beginning of the earliest comparative period presented in the first financial statements in which the entity applies this Interpretation. If the entity had previously applied this Interpretation before it applies the amendments, it shall recognise the adjustment resulting from the application of the amendments in retained earnings at the beginning of the earliest comparative period presented.