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**INTERPRETATION OF  
STATUTORY BOARD  
FINANCIAL  
REPORTING STANDARD**

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**INT SB-FRS 32**

**Intangible Assets - Web Site Costs**

This version of INT SB-FRS 32 does **not** include amendments that are effective for annual periods beginning **after** 1 January 2017.

Interpretation of Statutory Board Financial Reporting Standard 32 *Intangible Assets—Web Site Costs* (INT SB-FRS 32) is set out in paragraphs 7–10. INT SB-FRS 32 is accompanied by an example illustrating the application of the Interpretation. The scope and authority of Interpretations are set out in the *Preface to Statutory Board Financial Reporting Standards*.

**FOR THE ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE ACCOMPANYING INT SB-FRS 32, SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT.**

# Interpretation of Statutory Board Financial Reporting Standard 32

## *Intangible Assets—Web Site Costs*

### References

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- SB-FRS 1 *Presentation of Financial Statements* (as revised in 2008)
- SB-FRS 2 *Inventories* (as revised in 2004)
- SB-FRS 11 *Construction Contracts*
- SB-FRS 16 *Property, Plant and Equipment* (as revised in 2004)
- SB-FRS 17 *Leases* (as revised in 2004)
- SB-FRS 36 *Impairment of Assets* (as revised in 2004)
- SB-FRS 38 *Intangible Assets* (as revised in 2004)
- SB-FRS 103 *Business Combinations*

### Issue

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- 1 An entity may incur internal expenditure on the development and operation of its own web site for internal or external access. A web site designed for external access may be used for various purposes such as to promote and advertise an entity's own products and services, provide electronic services, and sell products and services. A web site designed for internal access may be used to store company policies and customer details, and search relevant information.
- 2 The stages of a web site's development can be described as follows:
  - (a) Planning – includes undertaking feasibility studies, defining objectives and specifications, evaluating alternatives and selecting preferences.
  - (b) Application and Infrastructure Development – includes obtaining a domain name, purchasing and developing hardware and operating software, installing developed applications and stress testing.
  - (c) Graphical Design Development – includes designing the appearance of web pages.
  - (d) Content Development – includes creating, purchasing, preparing and uploading information, either textual or graphical in nature, on the web site before the completion of the web site's development. This information may either be stored in separate databases that are integrated into (or accessed from) the web site or coded directly into the web pages.
- 3 Once development of a web site has been completed, the Operating stage begins. During this stage, an entity maintains and enhances the applications, infrastructure, graphical design and content of the web site.
- 4 When accounting for internal expenditure on the development and operation of an entity's own web site for internal or external access, the issues are:
  - (a) whether the web site is an internally generated intangible asset that is subject to the requirements of SB-FRS 38; and

- (b) the appropriate accounting treatment of such expenditure.
- 5 This Interpretation does not apply to expenditure on purchasing, developing, and operating hardware (eg web servers, staging servers, production servers and Internet connections) of a web site. Such expenditure is accounted for under SB-FRS 16. Additionally, when an entity incurs expenditure on an Internet service provider hosting the entity's web site, the expenditure is recognised as an expense under SB-FRS 1.88 and the *Framework*<sup>1</sup> when the services are received.
- 6 SB-FRS 38 does not apply to intangible assets held by an entity for sale in the ordinary course of business (see SB-FRS 2 and SB-FRS 11) or leases that fall within the scope of SB-FRS 17. Accordingly, this Interpretation does not apply to expenditure on the development or operation of a web site (or web site software) for sale to another entity. When a web site is leased under an operating lease, the lessor applies this Interpretation. When a web site is leased under a finance lease, the lessee applies this Interpretation after initial recognition of the leased asset.

## Consensus

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- 7 An entity's own web site that arises from development and is for internal or external access is an internally generated intangible asset that is subject to the requirements of SB-FRS 38.
- 8 A web site arising from development shall be recognised as an intangible asset if, and only if, in addition to complying with the general requirements described in SB-FRS 38.21 for recognition and initial measurement, an entity can satisfy the requirements in SB-FRS 38.57. In particular, an entity may be able to satisfy the requirement to demonstrate how its web site will generate probable future economic benefits in accordance with SB-FRS 38.57(d) when, for example, the web site is capable of generating revenues, including direct revenues from enabling orders to be placed. An entity is not able to demonstrate how a web site developed solely or primarily for promoting and advertising its own products and services will generate probable future economic benefits, and consequently all expenditure on developing such a web site shall be recognised as an expense when incurred.
- 9 Any internal expenditure on the development and operation of an entity's own web site shall be accounted for in accordance with SB-FRS 38. The nature of each activity for which expenditure is incurred (eg training employees and maintaining the web site) and the web site's stage of development or post-development shall be evaluated to determine the appropriate accounting treatment (additional guidance is provided in the illustrative example accompanying this Interpretation). For example:
- (a) the Planning stage is similar in nature to the research phase in SB-FRS 38.54–.56. Expenditure incurred in this stage shall be recognised as an expense when it is incurred.
- (b) the Application and Infrastructure Development stage, the Graphical Design stage and the Content Development stage, to the extent that content is developed for purposes other than to advertise and promote an entity's own products and services, are similar in nature to the development phase in SB-FRS 38.57–.64. Expenditure incurred in these stages shall be included in the cost of a web site recognised as an intangible asset in accordance with paragraph 8 of this Interpretation when the expenditure can be directly attributed and is necessary to creating, producing or preparing the web site for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management. For example, expenditure on purchasing or creating content (other than content that advertises and promotes an entity's own products and services) specifically for a web site, or expenditure to enable use of the content (eg a fee for acquiring a licence to reproduce) on the web site, shall be included in the cost of development when this condition is met. However, in accordance with SB-FRS 38.71, expenditure on an intangible item that

<sup>1</sup> In February 2011, the *Framework* was replaced with the *Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting*. Paragraph 21 was superseded by Chapter 3 of the *Conceptual Framework*.

was initially recognised as an expense in previous financial statements shall not be recognised as part of the cost of an intangible asset at a later date (eg if the costs of a copyright have been fully amortised, and the content is subsequently provided on a web site).

- (c) expenditure incurred in the Content Development stage, to the extent that content is developed to advertise and promote an entity's own products and services (eg digital photographs of products), shall be recognised as an expense when incurred in accordance with SB-FRS 38.69(c). For example, when accounting for expenditure on professional services for taking digital photographs of an entity's own products and for enhancing their display, expenditure shall be recognised as an expense as the professional services are received during the process, not when the digital photographs are displayed on the web site.
- (d) the Operating stage begins once development of a web site is complete. Expenditure incurred in this stage shall be recognised as an expense when it is incurred unless it meets the recognition criteria in SB-FRS 38.18.

- 10 A web site that is recognised as an intangible asset under paragraph 8 of this Interpretation shall be measured after initial recognition by applying the requirements of SB-FRS 38.72–.87. The best estimate of a web site's useful life should be short.

## **Effective date**

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This Interpretation becomes effective on 1 February 2006. The effects of adopting this Interpretation shall be accounted for using the transition requirements in the version of SB-FRS 38 that was issued in 2003. Therefore, when a web site does not meet the criteria for recognition as an intangible asset, but was previously recognised as an asset, the item shall be derecognised at the date when this Interpretation becomes effective. When a web site exists and the expenditure to develop it meets the criteria for recognition as an intangible asset, but was not previously recognised as an asset, the intangible asset shall not be recognised at the date when this Interpretation becomes effective. When a web site exists and the expenditure to develop it meets the criteria for recognition as an intangible asset, was previously recognised as an asset and initially measured at cost, the amount initially recognised is deemed to have been properly determined.

SB-FRS 1 (as revised in 2008) amended the terminology used throughout SB-FRSs. In addition it amended paragraph 5. An entity shall apply those amendments for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2009. If an entity applies SB-FRS 1 (revised 2008) for an earlier period, the amendments shall be applied for that earlier period.