

Processes followed by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA)

1. The Auditor-General publishes annual audit reports. Changes in legislation; i.e. the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) requires Government Bodies to assume responsibility for producing Annual reports containing the Auditor-Generals audit. A number of Departments have complied with legislation however this process will still be under the supervision of the Auditor-General. In future the Auditor-General's office will have responsibility for the publishing of special audit reports.
2. The report is then tabled in Parliament, which in turn tables it for consideration to the relevant Committee including the Public Accounts Committee.
SCOPA first assesses the contents of the report and classifies it according to three categories: ¹

2.1. Prioritization of Reports

2.1.2 Public Hearings

Category A: These are matters that would ideally always entail a public hearing.

- The audit opinion on votes and public entities is adverse, disclaimed or qualified.
- Special reports of the Auditor-General.
- Highly inadequate tabled responses to SCOPA recommendations.
- Matters of serious public concern not reported on by the Auditor-General.
- Size of budget and/or assets.
- Unqualified reports with material losses, cases of misconduct, and/or fruitless or unauthorized expenditure.

2.1.3 Further Interaction or Follow-up with Departments / Institutions

Category B: These are matters that don't necessarily require a hearing but a specific resolution or letter to express issues of concern or to acquire further explanation from accounting officers or authorities.

- Unqualified audit opinions – votes only.
 - Unsatisfactory responses to SCOPA recommendations.
 - Size of budget, assets and impact.
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2.1.4 Standard Resolutions

Category C: These are matters that require no overt action by SCOPA but a standard resolution or letter.

- Unqualified audit opinions – public entities.
- Satisfactory responses to SCOPA recommendations.

Success stories – departments or public entities with dramatic improvements or progress. (These will form part of the Annual Report but will not warrant a hearing.)

3. Deliberations take place around the findings contained in the report. The auditors responsible for the report brief the Committee.
4. Problem areas are identified and less severe offences are dealt with by way of correspondence. The correspondence takes the form of questions, compiled by the Committee, which are sent to Departments for reply. The auditors responsible for the report evaluate the replies received. In severe cases, the relevant Director-Generals and accounting officers are invited to attend a public debate around the specific areas of contention. Questions are put to the accounting officer to determine the underlining reasons for the offences; resolutions passed by the committee are strongly influenced at this stage.
5. The Committee drafts resolutions, which express the committee's recommendations. The Committee deliberates the draft and parties express their views on the recommendations. A final resolution is adopted and tabled in Parliament.
6. Parliament assumes responsibility for corresponding with the Executive Authority who is responsible for taking note of the recommendations and replying to the issues raised.
7. Correspondence or Public Hearings may again be called for in a financial year in order for the Committee to receive updates on progress made with relation to its resolutions.
8. The process resumes when the Auditor-General once again publishes its audit report.