

Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates in an Era of Disruptive Innovation

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Abstract

Aim/Purpose: This study aimed to assess the level of employers' expectations for accounting graduates in an era of disruptive innovation, and analyze differences in these expectations among employers.

Introduction/Background: Disruptive innovation, driven by digital technology advancements, has transformed various professions, including accounting, necessitating significant adaptations in skills and practices. As labor markets evolve, educational institutions are crucial in preparing graduates to meet these new demands. Aligning curricula with employer expectations is essential to ensure graduates possess the necessary competencies for the workforce. Therefore, in order to know the expectations of employers, the researcher investigated employers' expectations of accounting graduates, focusing on four key learning outcomes. The first outcome, Knowledge, was divided into General Knowledge (GK) and Accounting Knowledge (AK). GK includes understanding law, economics, finance, marketing, and management, while AK involves expertise in accounting principles, financial statements, internal control, risk management, auditing, and information systems. The second outcome, Skills, comprised Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills (LL21CS), such as communication, technology use, planning, creativity, teamwork, critical thinking, and adaptability. It also includes Professional Skills (PS), focusing on applying various disciplines to accounting tasks, data analysis, and using accounting software. The third outcome, Ethics, was split into General Ethics (GE) and Accounting Professional Ethics (APE). GE emphasized discipline, punctuality, and responsibility, while APE highlighted honesty, fairness, independence, confidentiality, and adherence to professional standards. The final outcome, Character, included General Character (GC) traits like courage, politeness, and leadership, and Asia-Pacific International University Character (AIUC) traits like kindness, resilience, and respect for cultural differences. The findings from this study can inform curriculum enhancements for higher educational institutions, ensuring alignment with employer requirements.

Methodology: The study surveyed 130 employers operating in the Central Region of Thailand. Data were collected using structured questionnaires consisting of three parts: Part 1: General information about the respondents; Part 2: Employers' expectations of desired characteristics of accounting graduates, consisting of four areas: 1) Knowledge; 2) Skills; 3) Ethics; and 4) Personal characteristics, totaling 70 items, using a Likert rating scale; Part 3: 4 additional questions. The statistical methods used for data analysis included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, independent *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVA.

Findings: The results showed that out of the sample group consisting of 130 individuals, 73% were female. Among the respondents, 32% were aged between 41 and 50 years, and 59% held a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 31% worked in a professional accounting service firm, 54% held a management-level job, and 84% were employed in the accounting field. Moreover, 52% of respondents had more than 15 years of work experience. The analysis of the levels of employers' expectations for accounting graduates revealed that employers placed the highest importance on Accounting Professional Ethics (APE), followed by General Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong

Learning and 21st Century Skills, Workplace Skills, Professional Skills, and General Knowledge. Comparative analysis indicated no significant differences in employer expectations based on gender or educational level. However, variations were observed in other factors: employers of different age groups had differing expectations regarding graduates' General Characters and AIU Character. Employers from different business types exhibited differing expectations concerning General Knowledge, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, Professional Skills, and General Ethics. Variations in job levels influenced expectations related to General Knowledge. Employers' occupational fields significantly affected expectations regarding Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, Professional Skills, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, and General Ethics. Additionally, differences in employers' work experiences affected their expectations of Accounting Professional Ethics.

Contributions/Impact on Society: This study highlights the critical importance of ethics and personal character in the professional development of accounting graduates. By identifying employers' specific expectations, the study provides valuable insights for educational institutions to use when revising their curricula. They need to ensure that graduates are well-prepared to meet the ethical and professional demands of workforces, thus contributing positively to business organizations and society. Additionally, this finding offers valuable guidance to high school students in choosing an accounting bachelor's degree program that meets employer expectations, strengthening their qualifications as competitive candidates upon graduation.

Recommendations: The study pointed out that employers prioritize the development of accounting ethics in graduates over other areas. Therefore, educational institutions should focus on integrating the development of ethics, professional codes of conduct, and strong personal characteristics into their curricula. This should be balanced with the necessary academic knowledge and skills to produce well-rounded, ethical, and competent professionals who can effectively meet the dynamic requirements of job markets.

Research Limitations: The study was limited to employers in the Central Region of Thailand, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions or countries. The focus on accounting graduates also limits the applicability of the results to other fields of study.

Future Research: Future research should expand the scope to include educational institutions in other regions to allow for broader applicability of the findings. Additionally, further studies should explore various factors influencing employers' expectations of accounting graduates to provide more comprehensive insights.

Keywords: *Accounting graduates, employers' expectations, innovation*

Introduction

Disruptive innovation represents a transformative change that replaces existing practices, often rendering them obsolete. This phenomenon is driven by advancements in digital technology and innovation (Singjanusong & Chotechoei, 2022). McConville (2023) highlighted technologies such as big data analytics, robotic process automation, artificial intelligence, and blockchain that are fundamentally reshaping the skill sets required of accountants. This transformation compels educational institutions to integrate these technologies into their accounting programs to adequately prepare graduates for the evolving landscape. Such technological and innovative changes have significantly impacted various professions, necessitating adaptations to new work processes. Professionals in the accounting field must also evolve and enhance their skills to remain competitive and meet labor market demands.

Educational institutions, as critical hubs for learning and graduate development, play a pivotal role in preparing future employees to meet these demands. Consequently, these institutions must prioritize the development of curricula that are aligned with employer needs, ensuring that graduates

will possess the competencies required in workforces. Understanding employers' expectations for accounting graduates enables educational institutions to design curricula and instructional methods that effectively address these needs, fostering the production of well-equipped and employable professionals.

A research study on *Entrepreneurs' Needs for the Bachelor of Accountancy Program and Characteristics of Accountants Desired by Accounting and Auditing Firms* highlighted several key attributes. These have included proficiency in accounting, professional and related disciplines, general management, organizational behavior, marketing, international business management, statistics and quantitative analysis, auditing, business law and taxation, and accounting systems and information. Furthermore, desirable qualities extend to moral and ethical standards, personal, professional, and social responsibility, analytical and integrative thinking, creativity, a positive attitude, modern technological proficiency, and effective communication and technology utilization (Gunnarapong et al., 2023). This aligned with a study by Ebaid (2021), which emphasized that both generic skills and technical skills are essential in the accounting field, with communication, teamwork, emotional stability, and analytical thinking ranking as the top requirements.

A study on the qualifications of accountants of enterprises in the digital era revealed that professional caution was the highest priority. Variations in employers' business experience influenced the desired characteristics of graduates, particularly practical academic expertise, work-related competencies, interpersonal abilities, and communication skills (Soeykrathoke, 2023). Briones et al. (2021) examined employers' preferences on employability skills of business management and accounting graduates, and found leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills to be the most highly valued. Conversely, formal accounting qualifications, technological skills, and innovative capacity were ranked the lowest. The study also highlighted demographic differences, noting that employer gender influenced preferences for leadership and management skills, while employer age affected expectations for professional accounting and management expertise.

Business types varied in their demand for professional accounting, communication, interpersonal, and management skills. Different business sectors require accounting graduates to possess diverse professional accounting, communication, interpersonal, and management skills. The demand for accounting skills may vary across different types of businesses, as certain industries do not require in-depth accounting knowledge. Research has also shown that, even within accounting positions, employers often place significant emphasis on the soft skills of employees. Similarly, communication skills have been found to differ considerably across various business sectors (Ghani et al., 2018). However, all job levels exhibited consistent expectations for accounting graduates across these areas. This aligns with the findings by Ratanasongtham et al. (2021), who reported that establishments in Uttaradit Province prioritized accountants who adhered to ethical and professional standards. Additionally, the study observed that differing business types and models in the region required accountants with varying practical academic skills, characters, interpersonal and communication abilities, and organizational and business management expertise.

Similarly, Jones (2023) found that both employers and instructors considered ethics the most important employability skill, followed by work ethic, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and communication. This emphasizes the enduring importance of strong ethical values and professional integrity in accountants, despite ongoing innovations. Accounting ethics education has gained increasing attention, with studies like *Accounting Ethics Education: Making Ethics Real* (Costa & Pinheiro, 2021) and *Accounting Ethics Education: Empirical Evidence from 25 Years of Research* (Mardawi et al., 2019) advocating for more effective teaching methods and curriculum integration. Research studies such as *Teaching Virtues and Values* (Pinheiro & Costa, 2021) and *Mapping Ethics Education in Accounting Research: A Bibliometric Analysis* (Poje & Zaman Groff, 2021) have highlighted the need for ethical competence in accounting education, and reinforced calls for innovative approaches to better prepare students for professional ethical challenges.

This study aimed to explore employers' expectations of accounting graduates across four key learning outcomes. First, the knowledge components comprised two main aspects: General

Knowledge (GK) and Accounting Knowledge (AK). General Knowledge encompasses an understanding of law, economics, finance, marketing, and organizational management. Accounting Knowledge involves expertise in accounting principles and methods, the preparation of financial statements, internal control, risk management, auditing, and accounting information systems.

Second, the skillset encompassed Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills (LL21CS), which include proficiency in language, communication, technological proficiency, planning, media literacy, creativity, teamwork, critical thinking, eagerness for continuous learning, and adaptability. Additionally, it includes Professional Skills (PS), involving the application of various disciplines to accounting tasks, data analysis for decision-making, and proficiency in using accounting, statistical, and research software. Lastly, Workplace Skills (WS) refer to the practical abilities necessary for performing effectively in a professional environment.

Third, ethical dimensions comprise two key components: General Ethics (GE) and Accounting Professional Ethics (APE). General Ethics pertain to qualities such as discipline, punctuality, public-mindedness, and responsibility towards oneself and others. Accounting Professional Ethics encompass adherence to ethical standards specific to the accounting profession, including honesty, fairness, independence, maintaining professional competence, performing duties in accordance with established professional standards, safeguarding confidentiality, ensuring transparency, refraining from concealing or misrepresenting information, and complying with applicable laws and regulations (Federation of Accounting Professions, 2024).

Finally, the learning outcome of Character traits is categorized into two aspects: General Character (GC) and Asia-Pacific International University Character (AIUC). General Character includes attributes such as the courage to express oneself, politeness, humility, meticulousness, and leadership. AIUC is characterized by being considerate, kind, generous, diligent, resilient under pressure, enthusiastic in service-mindedness, delivering professional services to the best of one's ability, and respecting cultural and ethnic differences. By incorporating insights from these studies, educational institutions can design curricula that not only align with industry requirements, but also cultivate adaptability among accounting graduates in the face of disruptive innovation

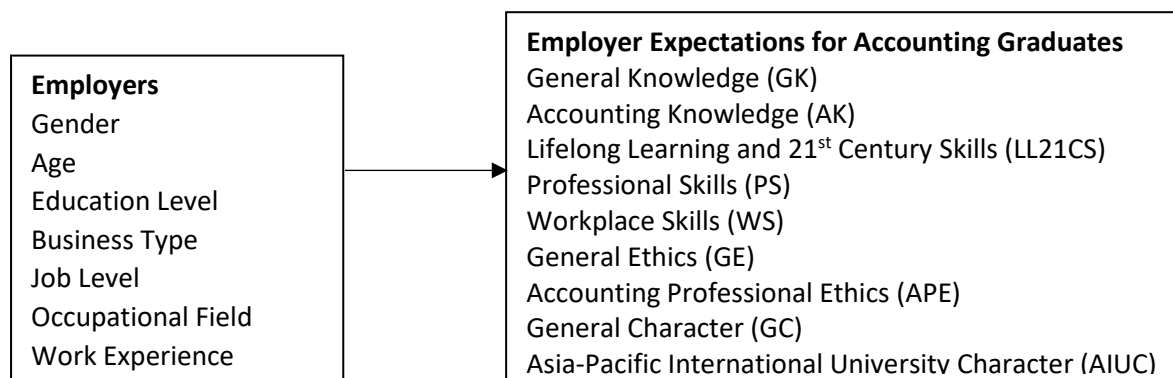
Research Objectives

1. To study the level of employers' expectations for accounting graduates in an era of disruptive innovation.
2. To compare differences of employers' expectations for accounting graduates in an era of disruptive innovation.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework for the research study on employers' expectations for accounting graduates in the era of disruptive innovation has been developed, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework*



Methodology

Population and Sample

The study focused on establishments situated in Thailand's central region, the same area where Asia-Pacific International University is located. Purposive sampling was used; the sample consisted of 400 individuals from the business sectors of Accounting Services, Educational Services, Financial Services, Retail Businesses, Real Estate and Construction, and Industrial and Manufacturing, specifically targeting supervisory and management-level positions. Responses were received from 130 participants, which represented a response rate of 32.5%. This response rate was adequate for data analysis (Aaker et al., 2001). Data collection took place between April and June 2024.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire used as a research tool consisted of three parts:

Part 1: General information of the respondents;

Part 2: Employers' expectations of the desired characteristics of accounting graduates, consisting of four areas: (a) knowledge, (b) skills, (c) ethics, and (c) personal characteristics, totaling 70 items, using the Likert Rating Scale, and

Part 3: Four additional questions.

The research tool was validated by three experts who assessed the content validity of the questions using Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) between Questions and Objectives. The overall IOC value was .96. Subsequently, the questionnaire was tested on a sample of 30 respondents with characteristics similar to the target group. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a reliability value of .96. According to Cho & Kim (2015), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 or higher indicates that the questionnaire possesses adequate reliability for data analysis.

Measurement

The statistics used in data analysis were frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, independent *t*-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Scheffe's method of comparison.

The scoring criteria (rating scale) used average scores for all ranges (Srisa-ard, 2011) as follows:

A mean value of 4.51–5.00 = a *maximum level* of expectation;

A mean value of 3.51–4.50 = a *high level* of expectation;

A mean value of 2.51–3.50 = a *medium level* of expectation;

A mean value of 1.51–2.50 = a *low level* of expectation;

A mean value of 1.00–1.50 = a *minimum level* of expectation

Research Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents' demographic profiles revealed that among the sampled group of 130 persons, the majority were female (95 persons, or 73%); many were aged 41-50 years (42 individuals, or 32%) and held a bachelor's degree (76, or 59%). Additionally, 40 individuals (31%) worked in accounting professional service businesses, while 70 (54%) held management job levels, and 109 of them (84%) worked in accounting jobs. Furthermore, 68 respondents (52%) had over 15 years of work experience.

Employers' Expectations Level on Accounting Graduates

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates indicated that Accounting Professional Ethics had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.74$, $SD = 0.43$), or highest level of expectation. This was followed by General Ethics ($\bar{X} = 4.66$, $SD = 0.46$) General Character, ($\bar{X} = 4.51$, $SD = 0.48$), and AIU character ($\bar{X} = 4.51$, $SD = 0.52$) with maximum levels of expectation. Accounting Knowledge had a high level of expectation ($\bar{X} = 4.45$, $SD = 0.59$), along with Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills ($\bar{X} = 4.28$, $SD = 0.52$). Workplace Skills ($\bar{X} = 4.25$, $SD = 0.70$), Professional Skills ($\bar{X} = 4.16$, $SD = 0.59$), and General Knowledge ($\bar{X} = 3.77$, $SD = 0.63$) all had high levels of expectation as well.

Comparisons of Differences in Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates

The analysis of the comparisons of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by gender, conducted at the statistical significance level of .05 as shown in Table 1, revealed that employers' gender did not result in significant differences in expectations for the accounting graduates.

Table 1 *Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Gender*

Variables	Male (n = 35)		Female (n = 95)		t	p
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
General Knowledge	3.77	0.63	3.77	0.64	0.01	.992
Accounting Knowledge	4.45	0.50	4.44	0.63	0.06	.956
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	4.29	0.37	4.28	0.56	0.12	.911
Professional Skills	4.16	0.50	4.16	0.62	0.04	.966
Workplace Skills	4.32	0.60	4.22	0.73	0.77	.443
General Ethics	4.62	0.41	4.67	0.47	0.59	.559
Accounting Professional Ethics	4.71	0.37	4.75	0.45	0.38	.707
General Character	4.44	0.42	4.53	0.49	0.95	.342
AIU Character	4.48	0.43	4.52	0.54	0.41	.681

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by age, presented in Table 2, indicated that employers of different age groups held varying expectations regarding the General Character and AIU Character of the graduates ($p < .05$). However, subsequent analysis using Scheffe's Post Hoc Test revealed no significant pairwise differences.

Table 2 *Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Age*

Variables		SS	df	MS	F	p
General Knowledge	Between Groups	0.89	4	0.22	0.55	.701
	Within Group	50.85	125	0.41		
	Total	51.72	129			
Accounting Knowledge	Between Groups	1.15	4	0.29	0.81	.522
	Within Group	44.31	125	0.35		
	Total	45.46	129			
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	Between Groups	1.36	4	0.34	1.29	.276
	Within Group	32.88	125	0.26		
	Total	34.24	129			
Professional Skills	Between Groups	2.66	4	0.66	1.98	.102
	Within Group	41.99	125	0.34		
	Total	44.64	129			
Workplace Skills	Between Groups	2.50	4	0.62	1.28	.281
	Within Group	60.91	125	0.49		
	Total	63.40	129			
General Ethics	Between Groups	.96	4	0.24	1.16	.330
	Within Group	25.78	125	0.21		
	Total	26.74	129			
Accounting Professional Ethics	Between Groups	1.24	4	0.31	1.73	.149
	Within Group	22.47	125	0.18		
	Total	23.71	129			
General Character	Between Groups	2.42	4	0.60	2.82	.028*
	Within Group	26.74	125	0.21		
	Total	29.16	129			
AIU Character	Between Groups	3.32	4	0.83	3.36	.012*
	Within Group	30.93	125	0.25		
	Total	34.25	129			

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by education level, conducted at the statistical significance level of .05 as shown in Table 3, revealed that employers with varying education levels exhibited similar expectations for the accounting graduates.

Table 3 *Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Education Level*

Variables		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
General Knowledge	Between Groups	2.71	3	0.90	2.32	.078
	Within Group	49.03	126	0.39		
	Total	51.74	129			
Accounting Knowledge	Between Groups	1.25	3	0.41	1.19	.318
	Within Group	44.21	126	0.35		
	Total	45.46	129			
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	Between Groups	0.28	3	0.09	0.34	.794
	Within Group	33.97	126	0.27		
	Total	34.24	129			
Professional Skills	Between Groups	1.69	3	0.56	1.65	.182
	Within Group	42.96	126	0.34		
	Total	44.64	129			
Workplace Skills	Between Groups	0.74	3	0.25	0.50	.687
	Within Group	62.67	126	0.50		
	Total	63.40	129			
General Ethics	Between Groups	0.25	3	0.08	0.40	.756
	Within Group	26.49	126	0.21		
	Total	26.74	129			
Accounting Professional Ethics	Between Groups	0.19	3	0.06	0.33	.803
	Within Group	23.52	126	0.19		
	Total	23.71	129			
General Character	Between Groups	0.71	3	0.24	1.04	.376
	Within Group	28.46	126	.23		
	Total	29.16	129			
AIU Character	Between Groups	0.22	3	0.07	0.27	.851
	Within Group	34.03	126	0.27		
	Total	34.25	129			

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by business type, presented in Table 4, revealed significant differences in expectations across various business sectors. Specifically, different business types had varying expectations regarding General Knowledge, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character ($p < .01$), as well as Professional Skills and General Ethics ($p < .05$). Upon conducting Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis, it was found that the Accounting Services group had higher expectations for General Knowledge in comparison to other business sectors (Table 5). Furthermore, the Accounting Services group also had higher expectations regarding Accounting Professional Ethics and General Character than the Real Estate and Construction group (Tables 6–7). However, no significant pairwise differences were observed for Professional Skills, Workplace Skills, General Ethics, or AIU Character.

Table 4 Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Business Type

Variables		SS	df	MS	F	p
General Knowledge	Between Groups	9.08	6	1.51	4.36	.000**
	Within Group	42.66	123	0.35		
	Total	51.74	129			
Accounting Knowledge	Between Groups	2.23	6	0.37	1.06	.394
	Within Group	43.24	123	0.35		
	Total	45.46	129			
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	Between Groups	3.23	6	0.54	2.14	.054
	Within Group	31.01	123	0.25		
	Total	34.24	129			
Professional Skills	Between Groups	5.03	6	0.84	2.604	.021*
	Within Group	39.61	123	0.32		
	Total	44.64	129			
Workplace Skills	Between Groups	9.63	6	1.61	3.67	.002**
	Within Group	53.78	123	0.44		
	Total	63.40	129			
General Ethics	Between Groups	2.92	6	0.49	2.51	.025*
	Within Group	23.82	123	0.19		
	Total	26.74	129			
Accounting Professional Ethics	Between Groups	3.54	6	0.59	3.60	.003**
	Within Group	20.17	123	.16		
	Total	23.71	129			
General Character	Between Groups	4.91	6	0.82	4.15	.001**
	Within Group	24.25	123	0.20		
	Total	29.16	129			
AIU Character	Between Groups	5.57	6	0.93	3.99	.001**
	Within Group	28.67	123	0.23		
	Total	34.25	129			

Note. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 5 Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis of General Knowledge and Business Type

Business Type	\bar{X}	AS (n = 40)	ES (n = 3)	FS (n = 2)	RB (n = 6)	REC (n = 17)	IM (n = 26)	O (n = 36)
Accounting Services (AS)	4.10	-	1.000	1.000	.999	.099	.057	.017*
Educational Services (ES)	4.28	-	-	1.000	.996	.675	.702	.662
Financial Services (FS)	4.08	-	-	-	1.000	.957	.967	.959
Retail Businesses (RB)	3.94	-	-	-	-	.909	.927	.900
Real Estate and Construction (REC)	3.54	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	1.000
Industrial and Manufacturing (IM)	3.58	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000
Others (O)	3.56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 6 Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis of Accounting Professional Ethics and Business Type

Business Type	\bar{X}	AS (n = 40)	ES (n = 3)	FS (n = 2)	RB (n = 6)	REC (n = 17)	IM (n = 26)	O (n = 36)
Accounting Services (AS)	4.92	-	1.000	1.000	.202	.045*	.235	.793
Educational Services (ES)	4.97	-	-	1.000	.688	.747	.932	.994
Financial Services (FS)	4.80	-	-	-	.961	.984	.999	1.000
Retail Businesses (RB)	4.40	-	-	-	-	1.000	.953	.673
Real Estate and Construction (REC)	4.49	-	-	-	-	-	.978	.557
Industrial and Manufacturing (IM)	4.63	-	-	-	-	-	-	.959
Others (O)	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 7 *Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis of General Character and Business Type*

Business Type	\bar{X}	AS (n = 40)	ES (n = 3)	FS (n = 2)	RB (n = 6)	REC (n = 17)	IM (n = 26)	O (n = 36)
Accounting Services (AS)	4.77	-	.998	.460	.253	.036*	.153	.137
Educational Services (ES)	4.59	-	-	.905	.966	.976	.999	.999
Financial Services (FS)	4.00	-	-	-	.999	.993	.945	.925
Retail Businesses (RB)	4.22	-	-	-	-	1.000	.985	.970
Real Estate and Construction (REC)	4.29	-	-	-	-	-	.987	.959
Industrial and Manufacturing (IM)	4.42	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000
Others (O)	4.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

The analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by job level, as presented in Table 8, indicated that there were varying expectations regarding General Knowledge ($p < .05$) for different job levels.

Table 8 *Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Job Levels*

Variables	Supervisory Level (n = 60)		Management Level (n = 70)		t	p
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
General Knowledge	3.64	0.63	3.89	0.62	-2.28	.024*
Accounting Knowledge	4.36	0.52	4.52	0.65	-1.50	.136
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	4.20	0.47	4.35	0.54	-1.65	.103
Professional Skills	4.07	0.57	4.24	0.60	-1.67	.098
Workplace Skills	4.14	0.69	4.33	0.70	-1.52	.132
General Ethics	4.61	0.46	4.70	0.45	-1.08	.282
Accounting Professional Ethics	4.69	0.41	4.78	0.44	-1.09	.276
General Character	4.46	0.48	4.55	0.47	-1.06	.293
AIU Character	4.45	0.53	4.56	0.50	-1.25	.214

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by occupational field, as presented in Table 9, revealed that employers from different occupational fields had varying expectations in several areas. These included Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, Professional Skills, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character ($p < .01$), and General Ethics ($p < .05$). Upon conducting Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis, it was found that employers in the accounting field had higher expectations of accounting graduates in Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, Professional Skills, Workplace Skills, General Ethics, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, and AIU Character compared to employers in other occupations (excluding those in the Accounting and Finance fields). Additionally, employers in the Finance field had higher expectations regarding Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, and General Character than those in other occupational fields (excluding the Accounting and Finance sectors).

Table 9 *Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Occupational Fields*

Variables		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
General Knowledge	Between Groups	1.66	2	.83	2.10	.126
	Within Group	50.08	127	.39		
	Total	51.74	129			
Accounting Knowledge	Between Groups	5.03	2	2.52	7.91	.001**
	Within Group	40.43	127	.32		
	Total	45.46	129			
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	Between Groups	3.69	2	1.85	7.67	.001**
	Within Group	30.55	127	.24		
	Total	34.24	129			
Professional Skills	Between Groups	3.28	2	1.64	5.04	.008**
	Within Group	41.36	127	.33		
	Total	44.64	129			
Workplace Skills	Between Groups	4.56	2	2.28	4.93	.009**
	Within Group	58.84	127	.46		
	Total	63.40	129			
General Ethics	Between Groups	1.52	2	.76	3.83	.024*
	Within Group	25.22	127	.20		
	Total	26.74	129			
Accounting Professional Ethics	Between Groups	1.93	2	.96	5.62	.005**
	Within Group	21.78	127	.17		
	Total	23.71	129			
General Character	Between Groups	2.57	2	1.29	6.15	.003**
	Within Group	26.59	127	.21		
	Total	29.16	129			
AIU Character	Between Groups	2.61	2	1.31	5.24	.007**
	Within Group	31.64	127	.25		
	Total	34.25	129			

Note. * $p \leq .05$ **, $p \leq .01$.

An analysis of employers' expectations for accounting graduates by work experience, as presented in Table 10, revealed that employers with varying years of work experience had different expectations regarding Accounting Professional Ethics ($p < .05$). A further examination using Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis indicated that employers with less than 5 years of work experience had higher expectations for accounting graduates in the area of Accounting Professional Ethics compared to employers with 5 to 10 years of work experience.

Table 10 Comparisons of Employers' Expectations for Accounting Graduates by Work Experience

Variables		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
General Knowledge	Between Groups	.38	3	.13	.31	.815
	Within Group	51.35	126	.41		
	Total	51.74	129			
Accounting Knowledge	Between Groups	.89	3	.30	.83	.477
	Within Group	44.57	126	.35		
	Total	45.46	129			
Lifelong Learning and 21 st Century Skills	Between Groups	.70	3	.23	.87	.457
	Within Group	33.55	126	.27		
	Total	34.24	129			
Professional Skills	Between Groups	.15	3	.05	.15	.933
	Within Group	44.49	126	.35		
	Total	44.64	129			
Workplace Skills	Between Groups	.32	3	.11	.22	.886
	Within Group	63.08	126	.50		
	Total	63.40	129			
General Ethics	Between Groups	1.29	3	.43	2.13	.100
	Within Group	25.45	126	.20		
	Total	26.74	129			
Accounting Professional Ethics	Between Groups	1.49	3	.50	2.81	.042*
	Within Group	22.22	126	.18		
	Total	23.71	129			
General Character	Between Groups	1.11	3	.37	1.66	.180
	Within Group	28.05	126	.22		
	Total	29.16	129			
AIU Character	Between Groups	.612	3	.20	.76	.516
	Within Group	33.63	126	.27		
	Total	34.25	129			

Note. * $p \leq .05$

Discussion

This study of employers' expectations for accounting graduates in an era of disruptive innovation found that employers had the highest expectations regarding Accounting Professional Ethics. This finding is aligned with previous research, which indicated that businesses prioritize accountants who demonstrate caution and professionalism (Soeykrathoke, 2023). Similarly, Jones (2023) found that ethics was rated as the most important employability skill by both employers and faculty, followed by work ethic, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and communication. Moreover, businesses in Uttaradit Province were found to have the greatest demand for accountants who adhere to ethical standards and professional conduct (Ratanasongtham et al., 2021). This highlights the fact that despite the ongoing disruptive innovations in the world, employers still prioritize accountants who exhibit strong ethical values and professional integrity. Additionally, accounting ethics education has gained increased attention in recent years, with a growing body of research advocating for more effective teaching methodologies and curricula integration.

Studies such as *Accounting Ethics Education: Making Ethics Real* (Costa & Pinheiro, 2021) have promoted comprehensive reflection on how ethics can be effectively taught to accounting students. *Accounting Ethics Education: Empirical Evidence from 25 Years of Research* (Mardawi et al., 2019) provides empirical insights into the long-term commitment of accounting academics to ethics education. *Accounting Ethics Education: Teaching Virtues and Values* (Pinheiro & Costa, 2021) explored the significance of fostering virtues and values in ethics training, while *Mapping Ethics Education in Accounting Research: A Bibliometric Analysis* (Poje & Zaman Groff, 2021) offered an extensive overview of historical trends and future research directions in accounting ethics education. These studies collectively highlight the necessity of ethical competence in accounting education,

advocating for innovative teaching approaches and deeper integration of ethical principles into accounting curricula to better prepare students for professional ethical challenges.

The second highest expectations from employers included General Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, Workplace Skills, and Professional Skills, while General Knowledge was the least prioritized. These results were consistent with Briones et al. (2021), who found that employers preferred leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills, in that order. Conversely, employers were least interested in formal accounting qualifications, technology skills, and the capacity for innovation. Furthermore, professional skills such as interpersonal skills, conducting oneself professionally, working with figures comfortably, being ethical, listening skills, and self-confidence were the top six prioritized essential skills by employers (Ebaid, 2021). In addition, evidence from labor markets suggested that professional accountants must demonstrate proficiency in utilizing relevant information technology, strong teamwork skills, a sense of responsibility, the capacity to work independently, analytical abilities, and a commitment to continuous learning, as these were the most highly valued attributes in the reviewed job advertisements (Barišić et al., 2022)

This study compared differences in employers' expectations for accounting graduates when categorized by gender, age, education level, business type, job level, occupation field, and work experience, and found no significant differences in expectations based on gender and education level. This contrasted with the findings of Briones et al. (2021), who noted that different genders had varying demands for accounting graduates with leadership and management skills. Additionally, the study revealed that employers of different age groups had varying expectations for accounting graduates in terms of General Character and AIU Character. This finding was consistent with Briones et al. (2021), who also observed that employers of different ages had distinct expectations regarding accounting graduates' professional accounting and management skills. This study's results, classified by business type, revealed that employers from different industries had varying expectations for accounting graduates in areas such as General Knowledge, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, Professional Skills, and General Ethics.

Specifically, the Accounting Services group held higher expectations for General Knowledge compared to other industries, and they also had higher expectations for Accounting Professional Ethics and General Character than the Real Estate and Construction group. These findings aligned with Briones et al. (2021) and Ghani et al. (2018), who noted that different business sectors require accounting graduates with diverse professional accounting, communication, interpersonal, and management skills. The demand for accounting skills may vary across different types of businesses, as certain industries do not require in-depth accounting knowledge. Research has shown that, even within accounting positions, employers often place significant emphasis on the soft skills of employees. Similarly, Ratanasongtham et al. (2021) highlighted that various business types and models in Uttaradit Province demanded different qualifications for accountants, focusing on practical academic skills, work-related abilities, personal traits, and interpersonal and communication skills, as well as organizational and business management competencies.

Furthermore, the study's findings, classified by job level, indicated varying expectations for General Knowledge for different job positions, which contrasted with the research of Briones et al. (2021), who found that different job positions had distinct requirements for accounting graduates across various skill areas. The results of the study, when classified by occupation field, also revealed that employers from different occupational sectors had varying expectations of accounting graduates in areas such as Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, Professional Skills, Workplace Skills, Accounting Professional Ethics, General Character, AIU Character, and General Ethics. Specifically, employers in the accounting field had higher expectations for accounting graduates in all these areas compared to employers in other occupational fields (those not classified under the accounting and finance groups). Similarly, employers in the finance field had higher expectations in Accounting Knowledge, Lifelong Learning and 21st Century Skills, and General Character compared to those in other occupations (again, excluding the accounting and finance groups).

Furthermore, the study's findings classified by work experience showed that employers with varying years of work experience had different expectations for accounting graduates, particularly in Accounting Professional Ethics. Employers with fewer than five years of work experience had higher expectations for Accounting Professional Ethics than those with five to ten years of experience. This finding was consistent with Soeykrathoke (2023), who noted that businesses with varying levels of experience have different requirements for desirable accountant qualities, including practical academic and work-related skills, as well as interpersonal and communication abilities. By contrast, a study by Kwabena and Amo (2024) found no significant differences in relation to the work experience of employers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research findings demonstrated that employers place the highest expectations on accounting graduates in terms of Accounting Professional Ethics. Consequently, educational institutions, as key providers of graduates for labor markets, should prioritize the development of ethics, professional codes of conduct, and strong personal characteristics in their curricula, alongside necessary knowledge and skills. This approach will ensure that graduates not only possess academic knowledge and competencies, but also demonstrate morality, ethics, and a sense of responsibility toward business organizations and society. Furthermore, this finding provides essential information for high school students selecting an accounting bachelor's degree program that is aligned with employer requirements, enhancing their qualifications as strong candidates after graduation.

The study was limited to employers in the Central Region of Thailand, which may have affected the generalizability of the findings to other regions or countries. The focus on accounting graduates also limits the applicability of the results to other fields of study. For future research, it is recommended that the scope of studies be expanded to include educational institutions in other regions, enabling a broader application of the findings. Additionally, further studies should explore the various factors that influence employers' expectations of accounting graduates to yield more comprehensive insights.

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