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Accounting Accuracy, Reconciliation and Internal Control in Tax-Compliance and Audit-Support Work at a Small Chartered Accountancy Practice: A Qualitative Placement-Based Case Study

Vrushabh Uday Hulle[1] and Prof. Aishwarya Pawar[2]
[1] MBA Finance Student (Batch 2025–27), School of Business, Indira University, Pune, India
[2] Faculty Mentor, School of Business, Indira University, Pune, India

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Abstract—This paper presents a descriptive, qualitative case study of accounting, reconciliation, tax-compliance support and audit documentation at a small Chartered Accountancy (CA) practice in Maharashtra. It is based on the author's professional placement of 15 July 2026 to 15 September 2026 as Audit & Account Assistant, carried out under professional supervision in a non-signing role. Six task areas, supported by Tally Prime and Microsoft Excel, are examined: bookkeeping and ledger scrutiny, Bank Reconciliation Statements (BRS), GST reconciliation against GSTR-2B, income-tax information checking using AIS, TIS and Form 26AS, TDS checking, and statutory audit support including vouching and working-paper indexing. The analysis identifies recurring control points: completeness of source documents, correct classification, comparison with an independent record, exception tracking, documentation, senior review and deadline prioritisation. Client confidentiality and the supporting nature of the role meant that no firm-wide time, error or client dataset was available, so no statistical or efficiency claims are made, and public statistics are used only to describe the national setting. A client-document checklist, a staggered review calendar, an exception register and a standard working-paper index are proposed as measures for future testing; none has been implemented or evaluated.

Index Terms—audit documentation, internal control, GST reconciliation, GSTR-2B, SA 230, small CA practice, professional placement, MSME.

I. Introduction

Small Chartered Accountancy (CA) practices now work in an environment where tax administration is largely digital. GST returns and statements on the GST portal sit alongside income-tax e-filing and three income-tax statements, namely Form 26AS, the Annual Information Statement (AIS) and the Taxpayer Information Summary (TIS). Each is an external record that has to be compared with the books a client keeps, which moves the professional task beyond transaction entry towards verification, reconciliation, exception handling and documentation. Public data indicate the scale of this environment, but they are national figures and not measures of the firm studied: gross GST collections were ₹11.37 lakh crore in FY 2020–21 and
₹22.08 lakh crore in FY 2024–25 [1], and the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) recorded 1,67,14,646 active taxpayers as on 30 June 2026, of whom proprietorships form the largest category at 76.9% [2].

Neither figure describes the clients, revenue or workload of the practice studied, which were not disclosed to the author.

A small practice often performs bookkeeping, tax-compliance support and audit-related work within one client relationship. The quality of a return or audit file can therefore depend on how information moves through connected stages: receipt of source documents, recording, comparison with an independent record, documentation of exceptions and senior review. A weakness at an early stage, such as an incomplete document set or a wrongly classified ledger entry, may create additional work later, although this study does not measure how often that happens.

Published studies of technology and automation in audit and accounting work rest on firm scenarios and interviews with auditors [3], [4], and Indian studies of GST compliance concentrate on taxpayer behaviour and revenue [5], [6]. The studies retrieved for this paper do not describe the day-to-day control steps inside a small Indian practice. This paper offers a process-level account based on the author's professional placement at a small CA practice in Maharashtra, from 15 July 2026 to 15 September 2026, where the author served as Audit & Account Assistant under the supervision of a practising Chartered Accountant, the industry guide. The role was supportive: final audit opinions, tax certifications and statutory filing decisions remained with qualified professionals.

A. Objectives and Scope

The study pursues four objectives. First, it describes how bookkeeping is carried out for micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME), partnership, retail and individual clients of a small CA practice. Second, it records what supporting a statutory audit involves in practice: vouching, documentation, indexing and passage of work to senior review. Third, it looks at how GST, income-tax and TDS checking is done, particularly where books must be reconciled with information generated on government portals. Fourth, it considers the combined use of Tally Prime and Microsoft Excel for accuracy, reconciliation and documentation, and identifies improvements that the placement observations support.

The scope is limited to the six task areas in Table I. Client identities, PANs, GSTINs, bank details, personal income details and identifiable transaction figures are excluded. The paper reports no firm-wide client count, revenue, error rate, time-saving percentage or workload statistic, because none was available to the author.



B. Organising Framework

The placement report describes the firm's workflow as a source–record–reconcile–review–report cycle. This paper uses that cycle as an organising framework: a compliance output is treated as the product of (i) complete source information, (ii) correct recording and classification, (iii) comparison with an independent or portal-generated record, (iv) exception tracking, (v) organised working papers and (vi) senior review. The framework structures the observations; it is not a tested causal model.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Audit documentation is defined in SA 230 as the record of audit procedures performed, relevant audit evidence obtained and conclusions reached [7]. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) guide to the standard states that documentation should be sufficient for an experienced auditor with no previous connection to the audit to understand the procedures, results, evidence and significant matters, should record who performed and who reviewed the work and when, and should be prepared on a timely basis [7]. For smaller or less complex audited entities documentation may be less extensive, but it must still be understandable to such a reviewer [7]. These expectations are the professional reference for reading the vouching and working paper indexing activities described later.

Evidence on internal control often comes from settings unlike a small Indian CA practice. Krishnan, Krishnan and Liang studied small US public companies that are non-accelerated filers and found that most of them benefited, in terms of reporting quality measured through discretionary accruals, from the internal-control requirements of Sarbanes–Oxley Sections 302 and 404a compared with the period before the Act [8]. The study supports the general relevance of control discipline but is not evidence about a CA practice.

Research on technology in audit and accounting practice adds a further point. Perdana, Lee and Chu describe four accounting-firm scenarios in which robotic process automation (RPA) could ease repetitive audit tasks, together with implementation challenges [3]. For India, Sharma et al. interviewed senior auditors and reported that technology helped audit work continue during COVID-19, while inadequate infrastructure and resistance to change limited further adoption [4]. Taken together, these studies suggest that tools can support routine comparison and data handling, but that their adoption depends on infrastructure and readiness to change, and that professional review remains necessary.

Indian research on GST compliance has examined why taxpayers comply. Narwal and Garg's review-based conceptual model links compliance behaviour to socio-psychological and institutional factors as well as economic ones [5]. Jagtiani reports that GST revenue buoyancy rose from about 0.9 to 1.3 as digital compliance tools were phased in between 2017 and 2024, while cautioning that digitalisation can leave smaller and less digitally equipped taxpayers behind [6].

This literature addresses documentation standards, technology in audit and accounting firms and taxpayer-level compliance. It says little about how a small practice turns imperfect client information into reconciled and reviewable working papers, which is the gap addressed here through a qualitative case study.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Role

The study is a descriptive, qualitative case of one organisation, built on the author's participation in work at a small CA practice in Maharashtra between 15 July 2026 and 15 September 2026. A certificate issued by the practice records the designation Audit & Account Assistant for this period. The author worked under the supervision of a practising Chartered Accountant (the industry guide) and the firm's staff; work was prepared for senior review, and the author did not sign audit reports, certify returns or take final tax decisions. A qualitative design was chosen because the placement produced no statistical dataset: the firm kept no detailed record of intern time, no firm-wide error log was available to the author, and client confidentiality ruled out the use of client figures.

B. Sources of Information

The primary material is the author's participation in assigned tasks, observation of the sequence followed in them, review of the firm's working formats and discussions with senior staff, as written up in the author's placement report for the School of Business, Indira University. Secondary sources (ICAI guidance, official government and portal publications, and peer-reviewed studies) are used only for context and interpretation. Public statistics are kept separate from firm-level observations and are never presented as firm data. No client record is reproduced.

C. Tasks Covered and Tools

Six interconnected task areas were covered. Tally Prime was used for accounting records and ledger work, and Microsoft Excel for matching, sorting, exception lists and reconciliation schedules. Table I summarises the process followed in each area and the working output.



TABLE I
TASK–PROCESS–OUTPUT MATRIX

Task area	Core process observed	Working output
Bookkeeping and ledger scrutiny	Check source documents → classify and enter vouchers in Tally Prime → review ledgers for unusual, duplicate or misclassified items → review trial balance.	Updated ledger / trial balance; exception notes
Bank Reconciliation Statement (BRS)	Compare bank statement with bank ledger → classify unmatched items → propose adjustments under supervision.	BRS working sheet
GST and GSTR-2B reconciliation	Compare purchase register with GSTR-2B (supplier GSTIN, invoice number, date, values) → classify differences → follow up with client or supplier through the senior.	Invoice-level ITC reconciliation sheet; exception list
Income-tax information checking	Compare client records with AIS, TIS and Form 26AS → record differences → seek clarification → pass verified information to the senior for computation.	Verification / discrepancy note
TDS checking	Identify payment categories → check nature, cumulative amount and available TDS records → flag items for senior review.	TDS working / exception list
Statutory audit support	Take sample selected by the senior → trace to invoice, receipt or bank record → record exceptions → index the working paper.	Indexed audit working paper

D. Recording and Selection of Observations

The analysis uses workflow-level observations recorded in the placement report. No client-level discrepancy is reported, and the observations are not a statistical sample of client files: no sampling frame was used, and no second coder reviewed the notes. The observation matrix (Table II) should therefore be read as a structured account of work and process dependencies, not as a count of errors or a ranking of staff performance.

E. Analysis

The task descriptions were compared across recurring control themes: source completeness, classification, independent comparison, exception tracking, documentation, senior review and deadline management. The themes were then mapped to the four objectives. No inferential statistics, before-and-after comparison, error-frequency calculation or efficiency estimate was possible or attempted.

F. Statutory Context and Terminology

The placement took place a few months after a change of direct-tax statute. According to the Income Tax Department's transition FAQ, the Income-tax Act, 2025 took effect on 1 April 2026 and repealed the Income-tax Act, 1961; matters for FY 2025–26 (assessment year 2026–27) continue under the 1961 Act, whereas income from 1 April 2026 onwards comes under the new Act and is identified by tax year [9]. The author's checking work therefore required attention to the period to which a record related as well as to the date on which the work was done; the legal position in each file was determined by the supervising professionals. The same FAQ states that the AIS continues for periods governed by the 1961 Act (up to AY 2026–27) and is replaced by Form No. 168 from Tax Year 2026–27 [9]; this paper uses the terms AIS, TIS and Form 26AS as they appear in the placement report.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Process Observations by Task

Table II records what the placement showed in each area and the corresponding control implication. The entries are workflow-level observations; they do not claim that every listed risk arose in a particular client file, and no counts are implied.

TABLE II
QUALITATIVE PLACEMENT OBSERVATION MATRIX

Area	Placement observation	Control implication
Source documents	Downstream work was easier when the required documents arrived together and in usable form and was delayed when they did not.	Request documents early; track pending items.
Accounting records	Ledger quality affected every later reconciliation, tax and audit task; a wrongly classified entry can carry into profit, tax and GST working.	Check source, classification and narration; review ledgers before relying on them.
Bank reconciliation	Unmatched bank items needed explanation (timing differences, unrecorded charges or receipts, reference mismatches); an unexplained difference was escalated, not forced to agree.	Classify and document every reconciling item.
GST reconciliation	Books and GSTR-2B did not align automatically; differences could reflect timing, missing documents, value mismatches or reference mismatches.	Match at invoice level; keep an exception list; decide eligibility by law and facts, not by the match alone.
Income-tax checking	Client information had to be compared with AIS, TIS and Form 26AS; a difference was investigated before being treated as a client error.	Record differences factually; escalate to the senior.



Area	Placement observation	Control implication
TDS checking	The nature of the payment, the payee, the cumulative amount and the timing had to be understood before withholding was considered; a ledger description alone could be insufficient.	Flag uncertain items for senior review; keep a clear working trail.
Audit support	Evidence was useful only if a reviewer could locate and understand it.	Use consistent references and an indexed file; record exceptions without speculating on cause.
Tools (Tally Prime, Excel)	Tally held structured accounting records; Excel gave a flexible space for matching two independently produced datasets and listing exceptions.	No tool-specific time or accuracy measure exists; no productivity gain is claimed.
Deadlines	GST, TDS, audit and income-tax work could reach review in the same period.	Prioritise by due date and review dependency; start reconciliation early.

B. Cross-Task Interpretation

1) Source information is an upstream dependency. A missing bank statement delays a BRS; an incomplete purchase register delays GST reconciliation; incomplete income details need clarification before the comparison with AIS, TIS and Form 26AS can be closed; and missing invoices prevent an audit working paper from being completed. Turnaround therefore depends partly on what reaches the practice and when, and not only on the speed of the person preparing the working. No measure of delay was available, so this is an observation about dependency and not a quantified effect.

2) Reconciliation recurs as a detective control. Across the tasks the preparer repeatedly compared two records: books against bank, purchase register against GSTR-2B, client information against portal-generated tax information, and ledger entry against supporting evidence. Source-document checks act earlier as preventive controls, and correcting entries or supplier and client follow-up act afterwards as corrective ones. The value of a reconciliation lies in identifying and explaining a difference; a difference was not presumed to be an error in either record until the item had been traced, because it might reflect timing, reporting or reference differences.

3) Documentation makes work reviewable. The illustrative working-paper structure in the placement report (reference, procedure, population, evidence, exception, conclusion and sign-off) mirrors what the ICAI guide expects a reviewer to be able to find: the items tested, the evidence examined, who prepared and reviewed the work and when, and the conclusion reached [7]. Clear Excel schedules and indexed papers also supported continuity between preparer and reviewer when a matter was carried forward for clarification.

4) Technology supported judgement but did not replace it. Tally Prime provided structured accounting records and Excel allowed flexible matching and exception listing, but neither decides whether an unusual transaction makes commercial sense, how far a document can be relied upon, or whether a difference should go back to the client for clarification. The placement produced no tool-specific timing or accuracy data, so no productivity gain is attributed to either application. This is consistent with studies that point to infrastructure, organisational readiness and implementation challenges as limits on technology adoption [3], [4].

5) Deadline compression is a process risk. GST, TDS, audit and income-tax work could reach review in the same period, leaving less time for follow-up and senior review. The author's responses were to prioritise by statutory due date and review dependency, to consult senior staff when two tasks seemed equally urgent, to begin reconciliation as soon as portal information was available, and to keep working papers organised so that reviewers did not have to reconstruct the file. The study did not test whether deadline pressure outweighed other risks, such as late client documents or staffing.

C. Public Sources on the Two Portal Reconciliations

GSTN describes Form GSTR-2B as a read-only, static, auto-drafted statement of input tax credit (ITC) that shows availability against the documents filed by a recipient's suppliers [10]. It therefore shows what suppliers reported, whereas a recipient's entitlement to credit depends on the conditions in section 16 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 [11]. This is why a GSTR-2B match was treated during the placement as a reconciliation reference and not as a conclusion on eligibility. The Income Tax Department describes AIS as a comprehensive view of information about a taxpayer, TIS as a category-wise, aggregated summary, and Form 26AS as showing TDS and TCS data [12]. Differences between these statements and a client's records required explanation, which during the placement was sought through clarification and senior review rather than assumption.

D. Alignment with the Objectives

Bookkeeping and BRS work addresses Objective 1, showing how source records become ledgers and are tested against bank information. Vouching and working paper indexing address Objective 2. The GST, AIS/TIS/Form 26AS and TDS checks address Objective 3, with reconciliation as the common method. The tools row of Table II and Section V-C address Objective 4. The alignment is descriptive and rests on the tasks recorded in the placement report.

V. Challenges, Limitations and Recommendations

A. Challenges

The main challenge was overlapping statutory deadlines across GST, TDS, audit and income-tax assignments. A second was dependence on timely client documents and portal information: even when the method was clear, a task often could not be closed until the document or statement



concerned arrived. A third was that differences between books and external records could not be settled by matching alone; the exact invoice or transaction had to be identified, the difference documented, and clarification or senior input sought. These conditions made prioritisation, exception documentation and communication part of the role.

B. Limitations

The study covers one practice and a two-month placement. The author worked in a supporting role and did not control final review, audit sign-off or statutory filing. Client confidentiality limited access to identifiable details and ruled out publishing client-level schedules. There was no firm-wide error log or detailed record of intern time, no comparison firm and no statistical testing. The observations rest on the author's own placement experience and records, with no second coder. The technology discussion is limited to Tally Prime and Excel, and the findings may not hold for firms using larger ERP or audit-automation platforms. Accordingly, the paper is a process case study, and its findings are not offered as typical of CA practices generally.

C. Recommendations

The recommendations follow from the observations. The first two, a client-document checklist with a simple tracker and staggered review windows, correspond to the main recommendation of the placement report; the exception register and working-paper index extend the same logic to follow-up and review. All four are proposals: none has been implemented or tested at the practice studied, and no benefit is claimed. Table III lists the indicators a future study could record.

TABLE III
PROPOSED PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE MEASURES

Proposed measure	Operational step	Observation addressed	Future indicator
1. Client-document checklist and tracker	Issue a service-specific list (GST, income tax, audit) before each recurring cycle; log each item in Excel as received, pending, clarification required or reviewed.	Upstream dependency on source documents	Document completeness at first submission; number of follow-up requests
2. Staggered review calendar	Reserve internal review slots across the cycle and flag statutory dependencies, so that files do not all reach senior review near the due date.	Deadline compression; review congestion	Time from completed preparation for senior review; items reaching review close to the due date
3. Exception register	Keep one log for BRS, GST, income-tax and TDS exceptions: item reference, source compared, nature of difference, owner, follow-up date and closure status.	Follow-up without repeating the full check	Age of open exceptions; time to closure
4. Working-paper index	Standardise fields: procedure, evidence reference, preparer, reviewer, date and unresolved matters.	Reviewability and continuity	Review queries per file; repeat work

Note: All four measures are proposals derived from placement observations. None has been implemented, tested or shown to improve turnaround or accuracy.

A future study could record, for each cycle, when a document was requested and received, the number of clarification rounds, the age of open exceptions and the time from completed preparation for senior review, before and after adoption of the Table III measures, and could extend the comparison across several small practices so that firm-specific features can be told apart from general ones.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has described accounting, reconciliation, tax-compliance support and audit documentation at the practice studied as connected processes. Across bookkeeping, BRS, GST and GSTR-2B reconciliation, income-tax information checking, TDS checking and audit support, the recurring control logic was to obtain usable source information, classify and record it correctly, compare it with an independent or portal-generated record, document exceptions and submit the work for senior review. The case suggests that the reliability of compliance work depends on technical procedures together with the quality and timing of the information and documentation that flow through them.

Tally Prime and Excel supported this work, but the placement did not measure their separate effect on speed or accuracy, and the paper makes no claim of efficiency gains. Four measures are proposed for future testing: a client-document checklist with a tracker, a staggered review calendar, an exception register and a standard working-paper index. The contribution is a grounded, process-level account from one small practice and not a statistical estimate of firm performance; its findings should not be generalised without comparative study.

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