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Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)

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Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)

ICSI is the body set up by law that trains and licenses Company Secretaries. A Company Secretary helps a company stay on the right side of company law. The name stands for Institute of Company Secretaries of India.

1 What is the ICSI?

ICSI stands for the Institute of Company Secretaries of India. It is a statutory body. It works under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Its head office is in New Delhi.



The ICSI Golden Jubilee postal stamp is released in New Delhi, 4 October 2017. The event inaugurated the ICSI golden jubilee year. Photo: Prime Minister's Office, GODL-India, via Wikimedia Commons.

When did it begin?

- **1968:** the ICSI was set up as a company, under the Companies Act, 1956.
- **1 January 1981:** the Company Secretaries Act, 1980 came into force.
- The Act turned the company into a statutory body.
- The Central Government fixed that date by notification S.O. 989(E) of 27 December 1980.

What does it do?

- It holds the exams for candidates.
- It regulates the training of students.
- It keeps the Register of persons qualified to practise as Company Secretaries.
- It grants certificates of practice.

Why do the two dates matter?

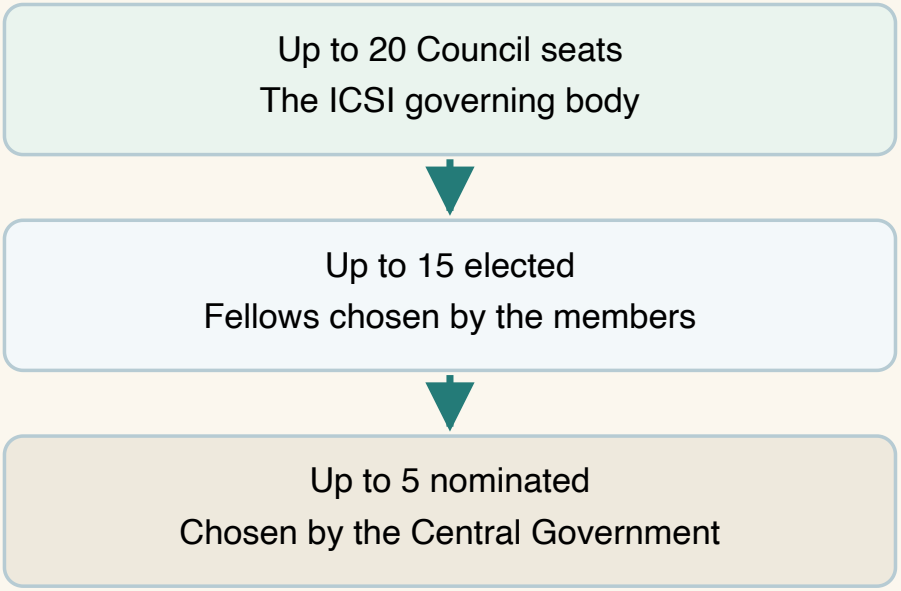
A question may give 1968 and 1981 as options. Both are right, for different events. Link 1968 with the company and 1981 with the Act.

> **Quick check 1.** ICSI was set up in 1968 as a company and became a statutory body in 1981. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: discipline.icsi.edu; icsi.edu

2 Who runs the ICSI?

A Council runs it. The Council has up to 20 seats.



How the Council seats are filled under Section 9. Original explanatory diagram.

How is the Council made up?

- Up to 15 members are elected by the members of the Institute.
- They must be Fellows, chosen from regional constituencies.
- Up to 5 members are nominated by the Central Government.
- A person holding a Central or State Government post cannot stand for the elected seats.

Who chooses the nominated seats?

The Central Government does. Section 9 of the Act allows it to nominate up to five members.

Does the Council have regional arms?

Yes. Section 23 of the Act lets the Council set up Regional Councils. They help run the Institute across the country.

Who was President in July 2026?

CS Pawan G. Chandak signed ICSI's representation to the Ministry on 16 July 2026, as President. Office-holders change every year. Learn the structure first.

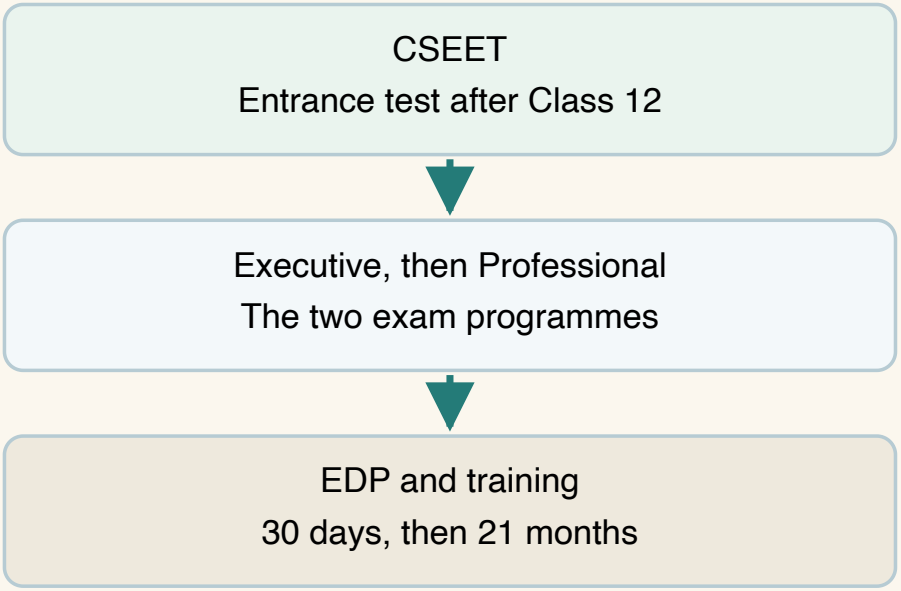
> **Quick check 2.** The ICSI Council can have up to 20 seats, with up to 5 nominated by the Central Government. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: discipline.icsi.edu; icsi.edu

Sources: taxscan.in; taxguru.in

3 How does a person become a Company Secretary?

The person must clear three exam stages and finish training. ICSI runs all of them.



The steps from entrance test to membership. Original explanatory diagram.

What are the steps?

1. **CSEET:** the entrance test. A candidate who has cleared Class 12 can sit it. 2. **Executive Programme:** the middle stage. 3. **Professional Programme:** the final exam stage. 4. **Training:** a 30-day Executive Development Programme (EDP), then 21 months of practical training.

Is the old Foundation stage still there?

No. CSEET took its place. In early February 2020, ICSI notified that Foundation was discontinued and CSEET became the entry test. Old guides still list Foundation.

Is training 15 months?

Not now. Old pages say 15 months. ICSI's rules since 2020 say 21 months, after the EDP. The EDP is 15 days online and 15 days in a classroom.

What is the exam trap?

Do not say "Foundation, Executive, Professional". The first stage is CSEET. The training is 21 months. Check ICSI's notice for the latest exam pattern.

> **Quick check 3.** A student today starts the CS course with the Foundation Programme and then does 15 months of training. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: taxmann.com; taxguru.in

Sources: taxmann.com; news.careers360.com

4 Who can sign a secretarial audit?

Only a Company Secretary in practice. A CS who is an employee cannot.

What is a secretarial audit?

Section 204 of the Companies Act, 2013 requires it. A secretarial audit checks whether a company followed the laws that apply to it. The report goes in Form MR-3.

Which companies need one?

- Every listed company.

- Every public company with paid-up share capital of ₹50 crore or more.
- Every public company with turnover of ₹250 crore or more.
- Every company with outstanding bank or public-institution loans of ₹100 crore or more.

What is a certificate of practice?

Section 6 of the Company Secretaries Act says a member cannot practise without it. The Council grants it. A salaried in-house CS does not hold one for the job.

What is the trap?

The word “audit” tempts students to name ICAI or NFRA. The signer here is a CS in practice.

> **Quick check 4.** A Company Secretary who is a salaried employee can sign a secretarial audit report. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: taxguru.in; equitylist.co; discipline.icsi.edu

5 Are ICSI, ICAI and ICMAI the same body?

No. They are three bodies for three professions. All three work under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

How do they compare?

Body	Profession	Founding law	Statutory from
ICAI	Chartered Accountants	Chartered Accountants Act, 1949	1 July 1949

Body	Profession	Founding law	Statutory from
ICMAI	Cost accountants	Cost Accountants Act, 1959	1959
ICSI	Company Secretaries	Company Secretaries Act, 1980	1 January 1981

Which is oldest?

ICAI is the oldest as a statutory body. ICMAI follows in 1959. ICSI began as a company in 1968 and became statutory in 1981.

What is the memory hook?

Read the law's year: 1949, 1959, 1980. The Cost Accountants Act was once called the Cost and Works Accountants Act. The years rise in that order. A question that swaps the Acts is wrong.

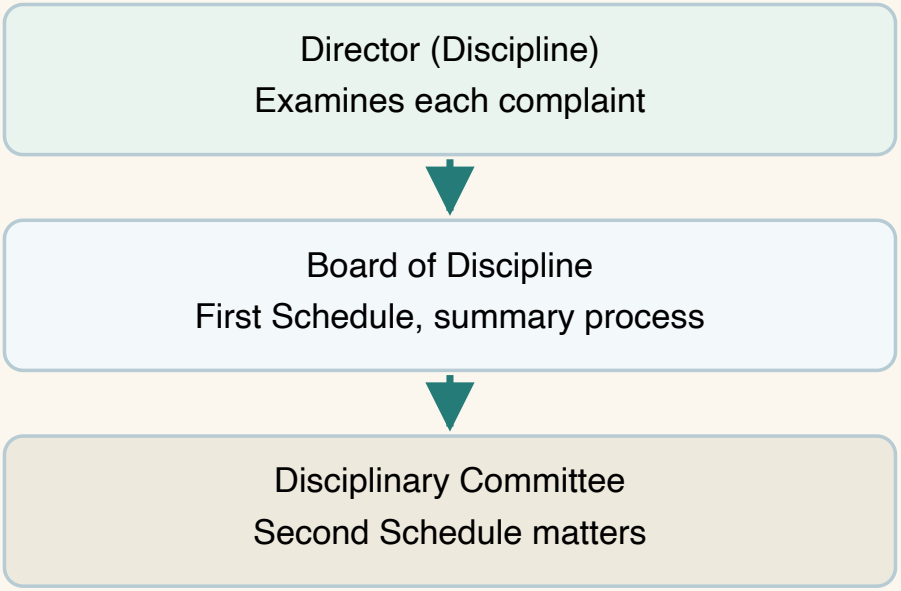
> **Quick check 5.** ICSI, ICAI and ICMAI are three bodies for three professions, set up by three different Acts. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: icai.org; icmai.in

Sources: prsindia.org; discipline.icsi.edu

6 How does ICSI discipline its members, and where does NFRA fit?

The 1980 Act builds a disciplinary system inside the Institute. NFRA is a separate body for auditors.



Where a complaint goes inside ICSI. Original explanatory diagram.

What is the ladder of discipline?

- A Director (Discipline) examines each complaint first.
- The Board of Discipline hears First Schedule misconduct, by a summary procedure.
- The Board can reprimand, remove a name for up to three months, or fine up to ₹1 lakh.
- The Disciplinary Committee hears Second Schedule misconduct.
- That Committee has the President or Vice-President in the chair.
- It also has two Council members and two nominees of the Central Government.
- An Appellate Authority exists under the Act.

What does NFRA cover?

NFRA acts under Section 132 of the Companies Act. Its Rule 3 gives it investigation power over the auditors of listed companies and other large classes. Secretarial audit is a different task, set by Section 204.

How should you keep them straight?

ICSI's own machinery handles Company Secretaries. NFRA looks at auditors of large companies. Do not say NFRA took over ICSI's role.

> **Quick check 6.** NFRA took over the discipline of Company Secretaries from ICSI. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: discipline.icsi.edu; nfra.gov.in

7 What is Rule 8A, and what did ICSI propose in 2026?

Rule 8A forces some private companies to hire a whole-time CS. ICSI wants a second trigger added.

What does the rule say today?

- Rule 8A is in the Companies (Appointment and Remuneration of Managerial Personnel) Rules, 2014.
- It covers private companies with paid-up share capital of ₹10 crore or more.
- The limit was raised from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore from 1 April 2020.
- The Supreme Court dismissed a petition against that rise.

What did ICSI propose?

- On 16 July 2026, ICSI wrote to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

- It asked for companies with borrowings above ₹50 crore to also need a whole-time CS.
- The test would apply at any time in a financial year, whatever the paid-up capital.
- ICSI noted that ₹50 crore already appears elsewhere in the Companies Act.

Is it law?

No. It was reported as a proposal in July and August 2026. Treat it as a proposal, not a rule.

> **Quick check 7.** Rule 8A already requires a whole-time Company Secretary once a company's borrowings pass ₹50 crore. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: taxmann.com; taxguru.in; taxscan.in

Practice MCQs

1. The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) became a full statutory body under which Act?

A. Companies Act, 1956

B. Company Secretaries Act, 1980

C. Company Secretaries Act, 1968

D. Institute of Company Secretaries Act, 1981

See answer ↓

2. When was ICSI first set up, and under which law?

A. 1 January 1981, under the Company Secretaries Act, 1980

B. 4 October 1968, under the Company Secretaries Act, 1980

C. 15 August 1968, under the Companies Act, 1956

D. 4 October 1968, under the Companies Act, 1956

See answer ↓

3. Which section of the Companies Act, 2013 makes secretarial audit mandatory for listed and other large companies?

A. Section 149

B. Section 143

C. Section 204

D. Section 138

See answer ↓

4. In July 2026, ICSI asked the government to widen Rule 8A so companies crossing which threshold must also hire a whole-time Company Secretary?

A. Turnover above ₹250 crore

B. Paid-up share capital above ₹10 crore

C. Net worth above ₹500 crore

D. Outstanding borrowings above ₹50 crore

See answer ↓

5. Which of these bodies is the audit-oversight regulator and has no jurisdiction over India's Company Secretaries?

A. Competition Commission of India (CCI)

B. SEBI

C. National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)

D. RBI

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The Company Secretaries Act, 1980 made ICSI a statutory body on 1 January 1981. Before that it was a company, set up under the Companies Act, 1956. That earlier Act governed the company, not the statutory body. The other two options name Acts that did not create ICSI. Memory hook: the Act is 1980, the start date is 1981. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** ICSI was set up in 1968 as a company under the Companies Act, 1956. It became a statutory body only on 1 January 1981, under the Company Secretaries Act, 1980. So 1 January 1981 is the statutory date, not the founding date. The options that pair 1968 with the 1980 Act mix the two events. The 15 August option gives a different day for the company. Memory hook: 1968 for the company, 1981 for the Act. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** Section 204 of the Companies Act, 2013 requires a secretarial audit for listed companies and other prescribed large companies. Only a Company Secretary in practice can sign the report, in Form MR-3. Section 143 deals with an auditor's powers and duties. Section 138 deals with internal audit. Section 149 deals with directors. Memory hook: 204 is for secretarial audit. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** ICSI proposed a second trigger for Rule 8A: outstanding borrowings above ₹50 crore. The existing Rule 8A trigger is ₹10 crore of paid-up capital for private companies. So the paid-up share capital option describes today's rule, not the proposal. A turnover of ₹250 crore is a secretarial audit limit in Section 204. Net worth of ₹500 crore is not ICSI's proposed trigger. Memory hook: ₹10 crore now, ₹50 crore proposed. The proposal was reported in July 2026. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** NFRA oversees auditors and audit quality. It has no jurisdiction over Company Secretaries. ICSI regulates the Company Secretaries profession. ICAI is the professional body of Chartered Accountants. SEBI regulates securities markets. The RBI regulates banks. The CCI looks after competition. ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The Company Secretaries Act, 1980 took effect on 1 January 1981. ↑ 1
2. **True.** Up to 15 are elected Fellows and up to 5 are nominees. ↑ 2
3. **False.** it is false. CSEET replaced Foundation, and training is 21 months after the EDP. ↑ 3

4. **False.** it is false. Only a Company Secretary in practice can sign it. ↑ 4
5. **True.** The Acts date from 1980, 1949 and 1959. ↑ 5
6. **False.** it is false. ICSI's Board of Discipline and Disciplinary Committee handle its members. ↑ 6
7. **False.** it is false. The ₹50 crore trigger is only ICSI's proposal, reported in July 2026. ↑ 7

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