

Interpretation of the Statutory Accounting Principles (E) Working Group**INT 20-01: ASU 2020-04 - Reference Rate Reform****INT 20-01 Dates Discussed**

Email Vote to Expose March 26, 2020; April 15, 2020

INT 20-01 References**Current:**

SSAP No. 15—Debt and Holding Company Obligations

SSAP No. 22R—Leases

SSAP No. 86—Derivatives

This INT applies to all SSAPs with contracts within scope of ASU 2020-04, which allows for modifications due to reference rate reform and provides for the optional expedient to be accounted for as a continuation of the existing contract.

INT 20-01 Issue

1. This interpretation has been issued to provide statutory accounting and reporting guidance for the adoption with modification of *ASU 2020-04 – Reference Rate Reform (Topic 848): Facilitation of the Effects of Reference Rate Reform on Financial Reporting* for applicable statutory accounting principles. The Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) issued ASU 2020-04 in March 2020 as optional, transitional and expedient guidance as a result of reference rate reform.
2. Reference rate reform typically refers to the transition away from referencing the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), and other interbank offered rates (IBORs), and moving toward alternative reference rates that are more observable or transaction based. In July 2017, the governing body responsible for regulating LIBOR announced it will no longer require banks to continue LIBOR submissions after 2021 – likely sunseting both the use and publication of LIBOR. An important note is that while LIBOR is the primary interbank offering rate, other similar rates are potentially affected by reference rate reform.
3. With a significant number of financial contracts solely referencing IBORs, their discontinuance will require organizations to reevaluate and modify any contract that does not contain a substitute reference rate. A large volume of contracts and other arrangements, such as debt agreements, lease agreements, and derivative instruments, will likely need to be modified to replace all references of interbank offering rates that are expected to be discontinued. While operational, logistical, and legal challenges exist due to the sheer volume of contracts that will require modification, accounting challenges were presented as contract modifications typically require an evaluation to determine whether the modifications result in the establishment of a new contract or the continuation of an existing contract. As is often the case, a change to the critical terms (including reference rate modifications) typically requires remeasurement of the contract, or in the case of a hedging relationship, a dedesignation of the transaction.
4. The overall guidance in ASU 2020-04 is that a qualifying modification (as a result of reference rate reform) should not be considered an event that requires contract remeasurement at the modification date or reassessment of a previous accounting determination. FASB concluded that as reference rate changes are a market-wide initiative, one that is required primarily due to the discontinuance of LIBOR, it is outside the control of an entity and is the sole reason compelling an entity to make modifications to contracts or hedging strategies. As such, FASB determined that the traditional financial reporting requirements of discontinuing such contracts and treating the modified contract as an entirely new contract or hedging relationship would 1) not provide decision-useful information to financial statement users and 2) require a reporting entity to incur significant costs in the financial statement preparation and potentially reflect an adverse financial statement impact, one of which may not accurately reflect the intent or economics of a modification to a contract or hedging transaction.

5. Guidance in ASU 2020-04 allows a method to ensure that the financial reporting results would continue to reflect the intended continuation of contracts and hedging relationships during the period of the market-wide transition to alternative reference rates – thus, generally not requiring remeasurement or dedesignation if certain criteria are met.

6. The optional, expedient and exceptions guidance provided by the amendments in ASU 2020-04 are applicable for all entities. However, they are only effective as of March 12, 2020 through December 31, 2022. This is because the amendments in ASU 2020-04 are intended to provide relief related to the accounting requirements in generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) due to the effects of the market-wide transition away from IBORs. The relief provided by the amendments is temporary in its application in alignment with the expected market transition period. However, the FASB will monitor the market-wide IBOR transition to determine whether future developments warrant any changes, including changes to the end date of the application of the amendments in this ASU. If such an update occurs, the Working Group may also consider similar action. It is not expected that the Working Group will take action prior to or in the absence of a FASB amendment.

7. The accounting issues are:

- a. Issue 1: Should a reporting entity interpret the guidance in ASU 2020-04 as broadly accepted for statutory accounting?
- b. Issue 2: Should the optional, expedient and exception guidance in ASU 2020-04 apply to debt and other service agreements addressed in SSAP No. 15?
- c. Issue 3: Should the optional, expedient and exception guidance in ASU 2020-04 apply to lease transactions addressed in SSAP No. 22R?
- d. Issue 4: Should the optional, expedient and exception guidance in ASU 2020-04 apply to derivative transactions addressed in SSAP No. 86?

INT 20-01 Discussion

8. For Issue 1, the Working Group came to the consensus that ASU 2020-04 shall be adopted, to include the same scope of applicable contracts or transactions for statutory accounting with the only modification related to a concept not utilized by statutory accounting, as noted below. The Working Group agreed the amendments provide appropriate temporary guidance that alleviate the following concerns due to reference rate reform:

- a. Simplifies accounting analyses under current GAAP and statutory accounting principles (SAP) for contract modifications.
 - i. All contracts within scope of ASU 2020-04, which allows for modifications due to reference rate reform and provides for the optional expedient to be accounted for as a continuation of the existing contract.
- b. Allows hedging relationships to continue without dedesignation upon a change in certain critical terms.
- c. Allows a change in the designated benchmark interest rate to a different eligible benchmark interest rate in a fair value hedging relationship.
- d. Suspends the assessment of certain qualifying conditions for fair value hedging relationships for which the shortcut method for assuming perfect hedge effectiveness is applied.
- e. Simplifies or temporarily suspends the assessment of hedge effectiveness for cash flow hedging relationships.
- f. The only SAP modification to this ASU is related to the option to sell debt currently classified held-to-maturity. This concept is not employed by statutory accounting and thus is not applicable.

9. For Issue 2, the Working Group came to the consensus that debt and service agreement modifications, as a result of reference rate reform, should not typically rise to the level of requiring a reversal and rebooking of the liability, as SSAP No. 15 states such liabilities should only be derecognized if extinguished. A reference rate modification should not generally require de-recognition and re-recognition under statutory accounting. Nonetheless, for clarity and consistency with ASU 2020-04, the Working Group came to the consensus that should an eligible contract be affected by reference rate reform, then the temporary guidance in ASU 2020-04 shall apply.

10. For Issue 3, the Working Group came to the consensus that lease modifications, solely caused by reference rate reform and ones eligible for optional expedience, likely do not rise to the level of a modification requiring re-recognition as a new lease under statutory accounting. SSAP No. 22R, paragraph 17 states only modifications in which grant the lessee additional rights shall be accounted for as a new lease. These changes are outside the scope allowed for optional expedience in ASU 2020-04. Nonetheless, for clarity and consistency with ASU 2020-04, the Working Group came to a consensus that if an eligible lease affected by reference rate reform, then the temporary guidance in ASU 2020-04 shall apply.

11. For Issue 4, the Working Group came to the consensus that ASU 2020-04 shall be applied to derivative transactions as the following considerations provided in the ASU are appropriate for statutory accounting:

- a. For any hedging relationship, upon a change to the critical terms of the hedging relationship, allow a reporting entity to continue hedge accounting rather than dedesignate the hedging relationship.
- b. For any hedging relationship, upon a change to the terms of the designated hedging instrument, allow an entity to change its systematic and rational method used to recognize the excluded component into earnings and adjust the fair value of the excluded component through earnings.
- c. For fair value hedges, allow a reporting entity to change the designated hedged benchmark interest rate and continue fair value hedge accounting.
- d. For cash flow hedges, adjust the guidance for assessment of hedge effectiveness to allow an entity to continue to apply cash flow hedge accounting.

12. Additionally, for GAAP purposes, if an entity has not adopted the amendments in *ASU 2017-12, Derivatives and Hedging*, it is precluded from being able to utilize certain expedients for hedge accounting. For statutory accounting purposes, only the hedge documentation requirements were adopted from ASU 2017-12, while the remainder of the items are pending statutory accounting review. The Working Group concluded that all allowed expedient methods are permitted as elections for all reporting entities under statutory accounting. However, if a reporting entity is a U.S. GAAP filer, the reporting entity may only make elections under ASU 2017-12 if such elections were also made for their U.S. GAAP financials.

INT 20-01 Status

13. No further discussion is planned.