Thinking Beyond Your Degree

Accounting Career Paths and Application Process

October 2023
OVERVIEW

1. Career-related support services
2. Accounting career paths
3. Accounting recruitment season
4. What to focus before and after applying to jobs
CAREER DEVELOPMENT
Achieve your professional potential

- Résumé and Cover Letter Review
- Interview Preparation & Practice
- LinkedIn Profile Optimization & Utilization
- Effective Networking Skills & Strategies
- Job Search Strategies
- Co-operative Education Program
- Elevate, Vmock & Standout
- Events (Career Fairs, Info Sessions, Workshops, etc.)
- Facilitating student and employer connections
To book an appointment with our Haskayne Career Specialists, email careercentre@haskayne.ucalgary.ca.

OR

1) Log in to your Haskayne Elevate account
2) Select "HSB Advising Appointments"
3) Follow the instructions to book a 30-minute one-on-one appointment with one of our Career Development Specialists
Accounting Career Paths

- Public Practice Firms (Big 4, Midsize & boutique firms)
- Private Sector – also referred to as “Industry”
- Public Service - CRA
Public Practice

➢ Provides accounting work for the general public. That means that you may have a variety of clients from individuals, partnerships, Trusts, Super funds, or companies. They can come from all walks of life and any kind of industry.

➢ Most common Service lines: Audit / Assurance and Tax (must pursue CPA designation)

➢ Common roles: Associate, Sr. Associate, Manager, Sr. Manager, Partner

➢ You might recognize BDO, Deloitte, EY, Grant Thornton, KPMG, MNP, PwC, RSM, etc.
Public Practice

➢ PROS

▪ Wide variety of work that you can expose to from your clients.
▪ Large cohort of new grad hires completing CPA together
▪ Social environment, colleagues become friends
▪ Prestige

➢ CONS

▪ Work / Life balance
▪ Constant deadline pressure during busy season (Jan – May)
▪ Highly competitive entry resulting in very low paid at the junior level
Private Sector “Industry”

- Completed accounting tasks for one group of specific businesses. For example, you work in the Finance Department of an oil and gas company, government body, or not for profit organization.
- You will deal with their accounts payable, or budgeting or any other accounting task within the Finance Department.
- Common roles: Accounts Payable / Receivable clerk, Junior Accountant, Accountant, Accounting Manager, Assistant Controller, Controller, CFO
- Possible to pursue CPA designation, not mandatory (through pre-approved program providers or experience verification route)
Private Sector “Industry”

➢ PROS
  ▪ Reasonable work life balance.
  ▪ Greater job stability working in a large organisation (depending on industry)
  ▪ Pay is higher at the junior level, however tapers off later in the career
  ▪ SME for company, contribute to strategic decision making

➢ CONS
  ▪ The work may be repetitive, ie. doing month end for the same group each month.
  ▪ There is reasonably low turnover, so it may be hard to get your next promotion.
Public Sector “CRA”

➢ Administer tax, benefits, and related programs, and ensure compliance on behalf of governments across Canada, thereby contributing to the ongoing economic and social well-being of Canadians.

➢ Common Services Lines: Call Centre, Audit

➢ Common Roles: Call centre agent, auditor

➢ Possible to pursue CPA designation (not mandatory for call centre roles)
Private Sector “CRA”

➢ PROS
  ▪ Great work-life balance.
  ▪ Greater job stability - union
  ▪ Pay is higher at the junior level, excellent benefits
  ▪ Progression over time

➢ CONS
  ▪ Very bureaucratic, a lot of red tape
  ▪ There is reasonably low turnover, so it may be hard to get your next promotion.
  ▪ Start in call center
Accounting Recruitment

Public practice positions are generally filled 1 to 1.5 years in advance. That means, if you want to work with a firm in 2024 (summer, co-op, new grad), you need to apply to roles in 2023.
Accounting Recruitment (typical)

• Traditionally Alberta has 2 accounting recruitment cycles (campaigns) in spring and fall, and leadership conference recruitment (campaign) in March

• Spring recruitment job postings go up in early May, and the selection process occurs in May / June.

• Fall recruitment job postings go up in early September, and the selection process occurs in Sept / Oct
Accounting Recruitment – What Employers Are Looking For

• A “well rounded” student with transferable skills developed through:
  ▪ Employment Experience (part-time, summer, co-op, etc.)
  ▪ Engagement with campus extra-curricular activities (student clubs, case competitions, sports, etc.)
  ▪ Volunteerism (involved in your community)
• Solid GPA (Generally a 3.0 or higher is competitive)
• Authenticity: Be yourself!
• Connection (through networking opportunities; start early!)
What to focus on PRIOR to applying

- **Job Postings**: Understand what the company is looking for
- **Cover Letter**: Tell your story and highlight your value based on the job posting
- **Resume**: Showcase how/when/where you developed the skills listed on the job posting from a variety of areas
- **LinkedIn Profile**: Use it to your advantage
- **Networking**: Get on the employer’s radar to increase your interview odds
What to focus on DURING application stage

• Be professional:
  • Strive for professional attire and demeanor

• Be engaged:
  • Attend as many networking events as you can. The more that the firms get to know you, the better your chances of application success

• Be accountable:
  • Always be on time for networking events
  • Attend any networking event that you RSVP’d to
  • If you absolutely can’t attend anymore, email to explain your absence
What to focus on AFTER applying

- **Interview**: Preparing & Practicing (yes, you need to practice!)
- **LinkedIn**: Keep building your professional network
- **Networking**: It never ends!
- **Offers**: Don’t just accept the first one
- **Feedback**: Take the extra step
Questions/Comments/Concerns