

CANDIDATE JOURNEY

PREPARING FOR CPA PEP 2023



Foreword

Welcome to the Chartered Professional Accountant Western School of Business (CPAWSB) and the Chartered Professional Education Program (CPA PEP).

Welcome to The Arena.

It was Day 1 of a CPA PEP workshop on a hot Saturday mid-summer day. Our class of thirty learners were in the middle of debriefing a case, discussing the required elements, what was missed, and why they were important.

What started out as a discussion of audit procedures escalated when one candidate jumped out of his seat and yelled, “Why don’t you just teach me professional judgement if it is SO NECESSARY?”

That was the moment I knew I had made it as an educator.

What is “it” exactly?

A connection. That moment when an educator breaks through the stress and uncertainty a learner is feeling and establishes trust. After all, an educator was once where the learner was and has now mastered that knowledge. We now want to give back and help the future of our profession master similar tricky topics.

Back to the story.

We were still in the realm of professional exchange, albeit barely. I gave him a moment and slowly smiled as he quickly found his set and retreated with haste.

“I get it,” I replied. “Much of this program, technical skills-wise, you know. The competency map ensures that. At “Entry,” in this graduate-level program, you have a toolbox of financial reporting, assurance, strategy and governance, finance, taxation, and management accounting skills. Each unit and workshop we work to integrate those tools, work in teams, and solve problems for various mock clients and bosses.”

I continued, “What we are doing here is difficult. Each scenario we encounter, attempt to address, and debrief is unlike anything you

have seen before. This happens for the duration of CPA PEP and gets progressively more difficult. This process shapes you. This process, to read, write, debrief, repeat, THIS is what develops your professional judgment.”

He nodded. The workshop continued.

Here at CPAWSB, we recognize developing professional judgment while earning a CPA designation is difficult. This book aims to shine a supportive light on the CPA journey, starting with Core 1, continuing to the CFE, and beyond. We were motivated to weave together our CPAWSB articles into one collective narrative. A single organized “path” similar to how learners will navigate CPA PEP.

In 2018 while working as an experienced CPAWSB educator and new faculty member at Dalhousie University, I started my education master’s degree at Queen’s University. I was fascinated with themes of learning efficacy and vulnerability in adult education. At CPAWSB and Dal, I work with brave learners who voluntarily welcome discomfort as a part of their education journey. Learners who acknowledge a gap between where they stand and the goals they wish to achieve. They do not know the exact way in which to bridge that gap, yet trust and proceed. One step at a time. This gap represents a journey of vulnerability and many other feelings: self doubt, fear of failure, judgment from others, ourselves.

Dr. Brené Brown, a researcher who investigates themes surrounding vulnerability, shame, and leadership, shares in her book *Daring Greatly* that she was inspired by a speech Teddy Roosevelt gave in 1910:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”

By deciding to pursue your CPA designation, you have entered the arena. It won't be easy, but you aren't alone. You have a whole network of support from your classmates, colleagues, online facilitators, session leaders, administrators, and resources, including our collection of articles in this book.

This book is organized as follows. First, with items for those new to CPA PEP. It then explains and examines elements of academic integrity. The third part offers advice surrounding tutors and mentors. Advice for after attaining one's CPA designation and career progression follows. Core and elective module advice come next, then exam and case writing best practices. This book concludes similar to your CPA education journey, with articles on Capstones 1 and 2, and the Common Final Examination (CFE).

You may want to read this book from start to finish, front to back. Or you could skim the table of contents and select a section or story that may be helpful to you. I encourage you to treat this book as a buffet; take what you want and leave the rest. Unlike a buffet, feel free to share it with your friends and colleagues. As adult learners in this graduate-level program, I sincerely hope our book supports your brave efforts as you progress in your CPA journey.

*"We can choose courage or we can choose comfort,
but we can't have both. Not at the same time."*

— Brené Brown

In 2021 I started my Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) to research effective business education practices. My CPA designation set a strong foundation for my career. It carried me through roles in public practice, the C-suite of a public company, and now as tenured teaching faculty. I am currently living my best life pursuing my goals and dreams, in large part due to my accounting designation and those who helped me attain it.

My journey is now building upon my CPA foundation, to include applied-research efforts in both professional and scholarly education. Like the CPA journey, the world of academic research and publishing is unclear. At times I have wanted to stand up and yell loudly (more than once!). That is okay because, like you, I have a team of supporters who will help me find my way.

*“I want to be in the arena. I want to be brave with my life. And when we make the choice to dare greatly, we sign up to get our a**es kicked.”*

— Brené Brown

CPA PEP is difficult. When times get tough, in the dark and in the light, know you are not alone. We are connected through our fabulous team of educators, staff, administrators, and resources like the guidance in this book. I am personally available via your D2L discussion boards and email. And if I do not reply right away, you know exactly where to find me: I will be in the arena.

See you there!

Sam Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

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DO YOU EVEN ACCOUNTANT? THE RIGHT PERSONALITY FOR CPA PEP

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA, is an educator and lead policy advisor for CPAWSB and a senior instructor of accounting at Dalhousie University. She is on a mission to understand and enable learner efficacy while eliminating doldrums occasionally associated with accounting education. Read more of Sam's posts at the CPAWSB blog.

A recent email from a learner hit me hard as I can relate to her self-doubt:

I really like your outgoing personality, which makes us feel very close. I am also a people person. However, some of my friends who have known me for a long time or my family think that I may not be suitable for the accounting profession because of my extroverted personality. They believe that accountants should be serious. Is an extroverted personality an advantage or a disadvantage in the accounting industry? Should I do something to change my character?

Personality fail

My grade school report cards read: Does well on tests, but she talks too much.

Creative, but she talks too much. Good energy, but...you get the point.

I'm not sure whether my parents were quoting Andre Gide, author of Autumn Leaves or Kurt Cobain from Nirvana when reinforcing: "It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not." Truth.

Professional mis-practice

During my annual review at a public accounting firm, a senior manager confirmed my work quality was stellar, and clients enjoyed working with me. However, he shared my loud personality made it appear at times, I didn't take the work seriously. The senior manager went on to say I would be a great asset as a firm partner, but I'd never make it there like "this."

He all but said it: Does well but talks too much.

DiSC profile

Before the Core 1 Orientation Workshop, candidates are required to take the DiSC personality profile quiz. Candidates receive a profile where they are varying amounts of Dominance, Influencing, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness.

Later in the program, during Capstone 1, candidates are placed into groups, with DiSC profiles used as one factor for group allocation. I often hear from candidates who wish to retake their DiSC profiles. When pressed as to why many candidates admit they didn't answer truthfully in their first DiSC questionnaire, they wanted to ensure they "fit" into the program.

Candidates were concerned they weren't "accountant enough" for CPA PEP.

After nearly 15 years of working closely with accountants, I will tell you that while many of us possess a shared passion for making things balance, there is also a mix of "types" of accountants. If you want to be a CPA, your personality is "accountant enough" for CPA PEP.

Find your people

Let's be real, some people cannot stand me. Others [will joyfully pose for mirror selfies](#) and [co-write blog posts](#) with me. My advice: Find your people as [this journey can be difficult](#).

Know your worth

CPAs can be outgoing, have fun AND also take things seriously. It need not be one or the other. Since becoming a designated accountant, I continue to work on my communication - speaking AND listening - skills.

The senior manager was correct: I quit shortly after that meeting and never made it to partner. The world needs all types of people, and together we fulfill the roles that keep the financial world spinning. Some people may decide to proceed down the path to work towards becoming a firm partner. Conversely, there are those of us who choose to fulfill the roles of the people who hire partners to work for them.

To all my Swiftees out there:

"And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake I shake it off, I shake it off (Whoo-hoo-hoo)"

— Taylor Swift
Shake it off



NO D IN FIRM: SHOULD A DOMINANT PERSONALITY STAY IN PUBLIC PRACTICE?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

A learner emailed me after reading [Do you even Accountant?](#)

I took the DiSC profile test, was 100% truthful and ended up bang smack in the middle of D. My “report card” from middle-school reads just as discussed in this blog! Ha.

Sometimes I do think that accounting is too docile a career for me (although I enjoy it a lot!) but reading this post made me more confident in my choice. Perhaps public practice will not be my chosen route. Got any tips for me?!

— A learner

My first tip is attributable to a YouTuber: It's only a problem when it's a problem. Let's dive in.

Are you progressing?

Are you learning and able to attain your CPA (i.e. is your employer supportive of your studies)? Then perhaps action is not required at this time. You are enjoying it “a lot” which is great!

Accounting is a versatile skillset

I see accounting as a tool. One that I also like a lot! However, it is how we use a tool that determines its usefulness. Bonus: if you find yourself in a position you do not like, cool, change it. CPAs are versatile and whatever experience you have gained can fuel your future endeavours. There is no such thing as “wasted time”, only lessons learned to be used later.

Re-assess early and often

Make and re-evaluate your goals every two-to-three years, which is advice I received from a Big-4 audit partner when I probed him mid-coffee for wisdom to share with learners. When pressed, he suggested a timeline of pre-CPA and every two-to-three years after that. His reasoning was to first establish a base-level of applied proficiency (CPA designation) and then proceed from there.

I would layer onto that advice to try your best to leave TO something versus leaving FROM something.

Teamwork makes the dreamwork

Consider not doing this alone. I have no doubt you could successfully go it alone and as a “D” perhaps you may even prefer to, but why? Each Saturday during the modules Michelle, a DC personality, and I would set up in Starbucks and collaborate remotely to prepare for the national exam for the legacy designation we earned. We continue to support and celebrate each other more than a decade later.

Accountants are famous

Accounting is a platform of knowledge where you choose your next adventure. Some notable accountants include Canadian cross-fit games athlete Brent Fikowski, TV superstar detective Peter Falk (Columbo), and Nike co-founder Phil Knight.

Are there misconceptions out there about what accountants can do and their perceived level of fun? Heck yes. Sometimes those stereotypes come in handy. From firm partners to consultants to educators, CPAs represent all personality types in all roles.

Summer shenanigans

August 2019, I was flying through Montreal to San Francisco when border security skeptically assessed my travel intentions.

Stern Handsome Guard: “Why are you going to San Francisco?” he inquired.

Concerned Canadian Accountant: “For a conference,” I replied politely.

SHG: “What type of conference?” he continued.

CCA: “Accounting,” I replied. That grabbed his attention.

SHG: “And exactly how many accountants are going to be there?” he continued, now smiling.

CCA: “Over two thousand,” I said, returning the smile.

SHG: “Ooooh well then, do not have too much fun,” he said laughingly with an eye roll.

He stamped my passport and gestured me to proceed.

The joke was on him. I had a blast getting lost in the streets, joining an impromptu washroom salsa-dancing party, and building friendships I hope last a long, long time.

Closing time

Many people will look at your situation through their lens and project their insecurities or judgments on you. From that space, they may offer unsolicited advice on how you should live your life.

I end this as I started: It’s only a problem when it’s a problem for YOU.

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

— Maya Angelou



STUDYING: THE SEARCH FOR ENOUGH

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

My mother took it upon herself in high school to be my number one cheerleader and taskmaster. Each day she would check to see if I had completed my homework. In university, her method of communication shifted to text. I graduated, started working, and she persisted. I was doing my best to balance work, studies, a failing relationship, neglected bulldog, and impaired friendships while trying to sneak in the occasional desk nap, meal, or shower.

I'm not proud of my response, one day when I smashed the call button to proclaim loudly, **“Mom! Don't you know? It can't be done! I just can't! IT'S. NOT. POSSIBLE!!!”**.

The Lesson

Yeesh. Thankfully, Helena Petersen is one heck of a patient human. She suggested I should focus on what I could reasonably accomplish that day and not worry about the rest. Momma Petersen helped me define “enough”.

The Synthesis

Throughout the years, my thinking, planning, and reading on this subject has evolved, and I communicate the culmination of that evolution to my candidates as follows: Vision, Mission and Strategy Mapping.

Vision: Plan where you want to go.

Where are you now and where you want to be?

Your vision could be becoming a CPA.

Mission: Determine how you will achieve your vision. Successfully completing education, examination, and practical experience are requirements of a CPA designation.

Strategy Mapping: Strategic objectives broken down into smaller goals in line with the mission, with small daily tasks in line with the goals separated into Green / Yellow / Red priorities.

- Green - MUST be completed each day. These are your “Big Wins.” If you do nothing that day, it will be considered a “win.”
 - The win could be completing your 60-minute practice case (Education), creating a study plan (Evaluation), or having a meeting with your CPA mentor (Experience).
- Yellow - your like to’s. Once you accomplish green, you can move onto these. Sometimes your yellows will evolve into greens, often depending on looming deadlines, but for right now, they play second fiddle to your main (Green) priorities.
 - On Saturday, this could be finalizing your weekly eBook readings and MCQs. The deadline for MCQs is not until Tuesday, so it would be great to get these done early, but not a necessity.
- Red - this is what you’re intentionally not going to do. It is essential to write these down to prevent them from swirling in the back of your mind.
 - E.g. colour-coding your study binder or re-writing notes because you dribbled some coffee on them. There are no marks for pretty.

Balanced Scorecard: Daily actions will compound and lead to you achieving growth, that is, the process of taking you from where you are to who you wish to become.

- You could use a software application such as [Asana](#) to map out your goals and set up daily tasks. I keep my daily tasks like this in my phone and enjoy being able to “tick-off” when I’ve completed a job each day.
- A quarterly check-in will provide feedback to see if you are meeting strategic objectives by completing daily operating tasks. If not, then it is time to reevaluate and tweak the smaller goals and daily tasks.

The Thank-you

I recently completed my Professional Master of Education from Queen’s University. In the past two years, my mom picked up her old habit, which was both endearing and only mildly annoying. Helena, a woman who worked retail until disability forced early retirement, taught me strategic planning to manage the daily stressors of life. It is my sincerest hope that she can help you too.



TOUGH LOVE: THIS JOURNEY IS DIFFICULT

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

“What happened to the other 3%?” The encouragement I received for my 97% calculus final exam results.

“How does the other player look?” The question asked after my second rugby concussion.

I wanted to provide you with a glimpse into my childhood before I launched into my own form of tough love. Trust me when I say I come by this stuff honestly.

Below I outline different strategies to show kindness to yourself, both during and outside pandemic times.



Understanding

Since COVID-19 created significant changes to how we educate and learn, I have been in awe of how students, candidates, colleagues, and administrators have adapted and carried forward. And after months of this, it's clear realized the adaptations have only just begun and we are each experiencing pandemic life differently.

Honesty

The thing is, to date, I have been largely unaffected by COVID-19. Sure, work looks different, and there is more of it, but things are fine overall. This is where I start feeling guilty. Perhaps you can relate.

With everything I have to be grateful for, how DARE I feel this low-level hum of anxiety? I have a good life, a strong support system, and a history of mental toughness. Yet...at times, I struggle. To compensate, I have shifted some work obligations and personal commitments. I am prioritizing myself with an extra dose of judgement-free kindness. I remember to talk to myself the way I would speak to a friend.

Focus

If you're feeling the same way, take some time, assess where you are at, and refocus your goals. If you are working towards where you eventually want to go, it does not matter how long it takes you to get there. I had a candidate in my CPA PEP workshop who embodied this focus. A former candidate of mine decided to make a career transition. He and his family mapped out the goal of attaining his CPA. He frequently took modules "off" so that he could alternate between focusing on CPA PEP, his wife and young children. Adam is now a CPA and became one on his timeline.

Advice

Lean on others and share your experience. Consider [accessing mental health resources](#) or discussing adjustments to your CPA path with learnersupport@cpawsb.ca. You are not alone. Take responsibility, seek out moments of inspiration, and be accepting of what comes next.

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go..."

— Dr. Seuss
Oh, the Places You'll Go!



THE IMPORTANCE OF VETTING YOUR SOURCES

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

You've probably heard "If it is too good to be true, it usually is." Unless you receive info from a CPA Canada or CPAWSB resource, it is secondary evidence. What does this mean? It means that while the information you have may be comforting (i.e., do x and y to pass), it is not verifiable. In other words, listen to that advice at your own risk.

I promise you if CPAWSB or CPA Canada could confirm specific actions to guarantee success, they would, and it would be shared with you directly, not via some secondary source or unverifiable rumour.

Assess the quality of the source

- Is this information directly from CPAWSB or CPA Canada?
 - If so, it is verifiable and reliable.
- Is there a conflict of interest or incentive from the source?
 - Someone benefiting from providing the advice does not necessarily mean it is "bad" advice, but understanding their motivation provides additional context.
- Does the source link to CPAWSB or CPA Canada information?
 - If so, this should give you comfort that you are using verifiable and reliable information.

Why you shouldn't listen to rumours?

We only have so much time and energy. Ask yourself whether your time

is well spent listening to or seeking guidance that may feel comforting, but is not verifiable. What is the risk? When listening and acting based on unsubstantiated hear-say (rumours) or outdated information, you risk unfavourable results and negatively impacting your self-confidence when you realize your mistake.

I suggest focusing on relevant information and [CPA PEP guidance](#), including writing and [debriefing units](#) and [studying technical material](#) while considering [practical tactics](#) and [time-saving tools](#).

Beware the well-intentioned source

If the information comes from someone who is not quoting a primary source but is someone who you aspire to be and who is without conflict of interest, I ask you to do one more thing:



Trust, yet verify

- Direct technical questions and questions about module success to the discussion board. It is monitored by CPAWSB and senior policy officials. You can consider the discussion board a primary source.
- Direct registration questions to cpamodule@cpawsb.ca.

Professional judgment

Our value as CPAs is not our ability to add large strings of numbers or multiply by a fraction. Instead, our value comes from being comfortable assessing new and complex situations, breaking down the problems, analyzing those problems, concluding and advising, all while being effective communicators and ensuring our CPA mindset is in place.

Real-life: There are no assurances

In a professional program, we develop professionals, which includes coaching candidates to continue to build their professional judgement. There are no certainties (i.e. if I do 'x' I will get 'y') so any exam built on certainties would not develop the type of professionals who are able to be proficient CPAs.

Start now

You simply can't say "I will learn this later after I pass the exam". Instead, learning how to sit with uncertainty, to put yourself in the best position given the available information, and to maximize your opportunity within that moment is part of becoming a CPA.

We set goals, we break the goals to sub-goals, [we create a plan using available resources](#), then we execute our plan to the best of our ability. We work the process. If we look for shortcuts now, maybe it works, maybe it doesn't.

If you decide to gamble and use unvetted sources, get lucky and pass, let me ask you this: When will you start putting in the work, relying on vetted experts, and getting comfortable with uncertainty? When will you decide to start being the professional you want to become?

If you aren't already on that path, I suggest starting now.

POWER MOVE: PART 1 – THE CANDIDATE

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Power: What is it, and how can we use it effectively? In this three-part mini-series, I will explore the dynamics of power in the context of the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP). This first post explores developing power as a candidate, then examines the ownership of power, and concludes with a discussion of how the power a candidate builds can develop their professional presence.



The Intro

Emotionally speaking, the weight of a Core 1 Orientation [Workshop](#) makes it challenging to teach. Learners are transitioning from the mindset of a student into the realities of being a CPA candidate, without the linear path of “do this, get this”, leaving a steep, unavoidable learning curve.

I see candidates feeling the weight of this transition when I receive messages laced with helplessness. Often it is because the candidate has yet to buy into the shift from undergraduate to graduate-level education. In undergraduate courses, you focus on what you know; CPA PEP emphasizes and evaluates the application of that knowledge. CPAs add value when there is no objective “right” answer because we master the dynamics of subjectivity by identifying, analyzing, concluding and advising, much like we [practice when writing cases](#).

The Hypothesis

I recently took a trip down memory lane to revisit how I—and people around me—perceived the dynamic between power and control. Was power personified via nice clothes, fancy titles, or was it fast cars? Some saw it as country-specific, the source of financial wealth, the education one receives. I thought about how my definition of ‘power’ has evolved as my career has matured. My current thinking about power includes elements of control, especially our impactful inputs for both [long-term planning](#) and maximizing our daily practices to achieve long-term goals. For me, power comes from setting myself up for success and doing my best, recognizing that my [best looks different every day](#).

The Candidate

During CPA PEP, the stakes are high, and the stress is real. The thing is, we often have more power and control over our surroundings than we recognize. In my next post, I’ll build on this exploration of power and how we have power even when it isn’t obvious that we do.

Do you have feedback on this post or a question you’d like answered by an experienced CPAWSB educator? Please contact your facilitator or send a question to the General Topic in the Candidate Discussion forum.

Lindsay McLachlan, CPA, CA

Lindsay McLachlan, CPA, CA was presented a CPAWSB Contractor Recognition Award for her notable and positive impact on her students and her dedication to excellence in her role as a facilitator for the CPA preparatory courses.

Lindsay appreciates the CPA profession’s strong commitment to its education programs and keeping up with changes in the marketplace and global economy. Courses are updated frequently and fine-tuned based on learner and facilitator feedback.

Lindsay’s advice for learners:

“Although embarking on a CPA designation is lots of work, and you need to be aware of and commit to this, it’s not forever!”

Whether you are in the CPA preparatory courses or CPA PEP, the structure is different than university. Everything you learn is an investment in your future. It’s not just about passing the program; it’s about gaining a body of knowledge and learning how to apply it.

A CPA education opens endless doors for you. Absorb everything wholeheartedly.”



POWER MOVE: PART 2 – THE PIVOT

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In this second part of the Power Move mini-series, I will continue the exploration into the theme of power, expanding on my current working definition into dynamics that we have more than we think we do.

The Professor

In 2004, three hundred undergraduate students were subjected to chipper economics professor, Dr. Dougie. One early morning, he proposed waitstaff should be tipped at the beginning of the dining experience so they could match the level of service to the remuneration provided. He argued tipping as one was leaving was pointless as it was unlikely the server would remember you the next time you dined with them.

I let out an audible laugh and was forced to share: As a seasoned Red Lobster waitress, I remembered those who treated me well financially, emotionally, and those who did not. Further I offered, did you really want to risk negative feelings from someone who is alone with your food?

The Opportunity

Similar to a seafood server, CPA candidates have more power and control than they may think. Candidates

choose when they [enroll in their CPA studies](#), [when they enroll in modules](#), [how to prepare for the core modules](#), [what electives they take](#), [when they write the CFE](#) and in which role. Further, candidates can choose from a robust plethora of support resources:

- [Learner support](#)
- [Under-rated candidate resources](#)
- [CPAWSB Blog](#)
- [Candidate Guide](#)
- [Surveys](#)

Using these resources, CPA PEP candidates have the power to take ownership of their studies and to take control of their success.

The Work-in-Process

My working definition of power includes recognizing when we have it. Oftentimes, we are more apt to give power to others and neglect harnessing it for ourselves. Consider [using available tools](#), [making a](#)

[plan](#), and [reflecting along](#) the way such that you shift your momentum enough that you feel in control, empowered.

Christine Kissel, CPA, CA

Christine Kissel, CPA, CA, was presented with the David Inhaber Distinguished Facilitator Award. The recipient of the award is selected by the CPAWSB and is recognized for their exemplary contribution to furthering CPAWSB's education objectives.

Christine attended the University of Lethbridge and graduated with a Bachelor of Management in 2004. From there, she started working on becoming a CA, getting her designation in 2009. Christine decided to start facilitating after having her daughter; she wanted work that would allow her to stay home. She completed CA facilitator training in February 2010 and started facilitating in May of that year.

To candidates just starting the CPA PEP program, Christine offers:

"It's beneficial to dive into the recommended reading and resources right away as a starting point for your assignments. As well, candidates should also take advantage of their online facilitator and not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns."



POWER MOVE: PART 3 – THE PROFESSIONAL

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In this third and final part of the Power Move mini-series, I will complete exploring the theme of power, ending with my latest definition of power and how it relates to a candidate's professional journey.

To become a CPA, a candidate must complete three requirements: education, evaluation, and experience. Our learning journey as CPAs does not cease upon membership; there are formal annual continuing professional development requirements. Further, CPAs often choose to invest in their personal growth to ensure their career meets their definition of success.

The Mindset

For future CPAs it is important to ask the question, what kind of professional are you aspiring to be? If you subscribe to having a growth mindset, you believe abilities can be achieved through dedication and hard work and are not “fixed” at birth (Dweck, 2008). Candidates with a growth mindset can develop into the CPA they wish to become.

The Workplace

Professional Experience Reporting Tool (PERT) requires CPA candidates

to demonstrate leadership in the form of supervising others. I often chant a mantra in my workshops: LEARN! DO! TEACH! where I offer one does not truly possess mastery over a concept until they can teach it. Often, we think we know how to do something but when we try and explain it aloud to others, the words are not there. Now let me ask you, whose fault is that and what can we do to bridge the gap between where we are and what we wish to achieve? How you answer that question will help determine the type of professional you will develop into.

The Director

Within two years after becoming a designated accountant, I earned a senior leadership position and found myself facing well-deserved criticism in a large boardroom filled with many witnesses. The onslaught of verbal jiu-jitsu from one participant left me emotionally concussed. After my opponent commenced his victory lap, his senior colleague smiled at me and



acknowledged that was a bit of a rough one. John shared, “We’ve all been there” – and he meant everyone. It turned out that the mixed martial arts language specialist had had a few public fallouts. Perhaps the type of professional my attacker developed into resulted from criticism he had received earlier in his career, which impacted how he chose to deal with it then and continued to impact how he interacted with others.

The Definition

My current definition of power is as follows: Power comes from recognizing that we have choices, including in how we act and react to situations. Possessing the ability to squash, crush, emulsify another...and then choosing not to. The champion of restraint, a pursuit of kindness. The ultimate power move.

The Choice

In [part 1](#), I explored the power dynamics of entering CPA PEP and tools designed to help candidates with that transition. In [part 2](#), I discussed my evolving definition of power with examples of Doug sharing his platform and myself delivering Ultimate Feasts, alongside resources available for candidates to take ownership over their CPA education journeys. In this post, we conclude the three-part mini-series by looking at power juxtaposed by two different professionals.

We all have power – yes, YOU! How will you use yours?

“No one is you and that is your biggest power.”

— Dave Grohl

CANDIDATE SURVEY FEEDBACK: WHERE DOES IT GO?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

With demands from school, work, family, perhaps even a few unimpaired friendships, a candidate's most valuable asset is often time, and we accounting educators understand this. Today, I'm sharing where your survey feedback goes and why the time you spend providing that feedback has value.

You are asked to complete two surveys during each module: a workshop survey and a module-end survey.

Workshop survey

The workshop survey has three main parts: logistics, materials, and instruction. The survey link is in the subsequent weeks' activities and time permitting, your session leader will give you time on Sunday afternoon to complete it.

Module-end survey

Similar to the workshop survey, the module-end survey consists of sections for feedback on module materials and the delivery of those materials. The focus of the module-end survey is to evaluate the online portion of CPA PEP's blended learning environment, which is why there is no section for location logistics. A link to this survey will be provided in the final weeks' activities.

How feedback is used

CPA PEP is nationally developed, regionally delivered; the facilities where the workshop takes place (logistics) and who delivers the materials (instruction) are managed by CPAWSB, while the activities (materials) are created by CPA Canada.

1. Location

CPAWSB's logistics department reviews candidates' feedback to assess future workshop locations. By providing an honest assessment as to the adequacy of your weekend workshop, CPAWSB will ensure that candidates have access to an environment conducive to maximize your learning experience.

2. Instruction

Feedback on instruction contributes to the future hiring of session leaders and online facilitators (hereafter referred to interchangeably as "educators"). Your

feedback has a direct and immediate impact on the level of education future CPA PEP candidates receive. Qualitative feedback is reviewed by CPAWSB management; positive feedback is used to support future hiring decisions; constructive feedback including instances of policy violation, is used for training and coaching purposes.

Each educator receives a score based on the quantitative score. That score is organized by module and session type (e.g. a session leader may have a score for Capstone 1 and Taxation; an online facilitator may have a score for Assurance only). CPAWSB's Director, Contractor Management, will staff according to highest-scoring educators while factoring in location when staffing the workshops. This process was developed to ensure candidates are receiving a high-level of effective instruction.

3. Materials

Educators do not have control over CPA PEP materials. In fact, they are under strict instruction not to alter the materials or supplement them with their own. Should an educator provide you technical material outside of the materials in the course, that action is considered a policy violation and candidates should note such instances in their qualitative feedback for delivery of instruction.

Feedback on module materials goes directly to CPA Canada and is used to shape future module revisions. Keep in mind, each module (Core, Elective, and Capstone) follows a different development cycle, meaning some feedback may not be implemented until the next development cycle begins for that module. However, depending on the topic, I have seen candidate feedback implemented promptly by CPA Canada.

4. Educator and management accountability

Candidate survey feedback was used to develop [Experienced Facilitator Training](#). Also, there is an evaluation of CPAWSB CPA PEP Management based on overall candidate satisfaction. A comprehensive system exists to ensure as stakeholders, the collective candidate voice has the power for measurable impact.

If you have more feedback

Send it here...

If you have feedback that falls outside the module-end or workshop surveys, consider emailing cpamodule@cpawsb.ca. Our team will reply during regular business hours. If you have concerns about your facilitator, review the guidance in your [Candidate Guide](#) for guidance.

...But not here

CPA Canada's IT support team is the appropriate place to log a helpdesk ticket to resolve your technical issues. IT specialists manage the support line. Similarly, module discussion boards are moderated by lead facilitators hired by CPAWSB who answer technical and policy-related questions. Systems are not in place for IT specialists or lead facilitators to turn feedback they receive into actionable solutions.

Thank you for your feedback

The feedback you provide is about contributing to the community you are part of. You are respected, you are valued, you are heard. Thank you for being a part of our CPAWSB community.

GOT MOTIVATION?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

No Mo'

While gaining practical experience, I used music to spark my motivation (you know, that “mo”). Whether it was Britney Spears who encouraged me to write my practice cases or Limp Bizkit helping me prioritize, their melodies often helped me [refocus daily actions](#).

Growing up, we often read *The Little Engine that Could* (Ong, 1988). My parents insisted I repeat, alongside the narrator, “I think I can, I THINK I CAN,” encouraging me to link positive thought to accomplishing goals.

Defining Mo'

Psychologist Albert Bandura defines self-efficacy as a personal judgment of “how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations.” (Werner 2008)¹ elaborates on Bandura’s work, explaining a strong sense of personal efficacy as a driving force behind any achievement. Without it, there is little open-mindedness to new ideas, willingness to reflect on ones’ own plans, or motivation and confidence in becoming proactive.

¹ Werner, W. (2008). Teaching for hope. In R. Case & P. Clark (Eds.), *The anthology of social studies, volume 2: Issues and strategies for secondary teachers* (pp. 193–197). Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.



If not now, when?



I would like to explore how to silence what Stephen Pressfield has termed “the resistance,” a force that creeps into your mind and tells you that “this time is different; this time, you cannot succeed”.

Perhaps if we can work to understand the resistance, we may turn up the volume of self-efficacy to overpower it. If you think you can, you will.

Mo’ PEP

CPA Canada designs CPA PEP modules to provide candidates with incremental opportunities of applied knowledge activities to fight that resistance, which is why it is crucial to incorporate [CPA PEP materials](#) while adhering to [time constraints](#) and [using best case writing practices](#). That way when you are in your exam, a difficult work situation, or another unexpected challenge, you can find peace knowing that you have put in the focused practice building your self-efficacy muscle.

Re-Defining Mo’

Will there be bumps?? Yes! And you are not alone. Princeton Assistant Professor Johannes Haushofer shared his openly by publishing his [CV of Failures](#).

One may find reframing helpful, that is to provide a different lens in which to see the same actions or results. “Seven fall, eight getting up” is a Japanese proverb reminding us the only failure is quitting. My outsourced momentum to write this piece was care of Ms. Spears, take it away Britney:

“No time to quit now, just time to get it now. Pick up what I’m putting down.”

— Brittney Spears
*Work B**ch, Album: Brittney Jean, 1993*

You can. You will.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? UNDERSTANDING CPA PEP'S FILE-NAMING POLICY

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

As Lead Policy Advisor for CPAWSB I will admit policies sometimes leave me scratching my head. Why is this necessary? Why is this so difficult for people to follow? I have the same questions as candidates likely have.

As an educator, I go to conferences and hang out with other educators. We will often cover a breadth of topics including how to “best” teach learners. A common theme is ensuring educators explain the “why” – diving into the significance or “so what” of the technical – to make it sticky. Gone are the days of “because I said so” being an acceptable response. Thank gosh.

The purpose of this post is to provide learners and educators insights into the significance of appropriate naming protocol when submitting assignments and a nifty tool to help learners master this skill.

What is the significance of the File Naming Policy?

Plagiarism

The most significant reason for appropriate naming of files is it allows for our plagiarism team to perform part of their [plagiarism investigations](#). While CPAWSB supports collaboration, sharing CPA [copyright materials](#) (which includes candidate submissions) is a violation of policy.

Bigger picture: It is unfair to ethical candidates if cheaters are not investigated and caught. Even bigger picture: We are a profession built on an ethical foundation and we cannot risk graduating candidates without ensuring their submissions are their own.

Training future CPAs

CPAs are often responsible for large sums of money, private information, and tight deadlines. We are responsible for paying attention and executing based on small details that may have potentially large negative repercussions if done incorrectly.

Fortunately, the penalty is less harsh in CPAWSB. No one will fine you, fire you, or even fail you if you incorrectly name

your files. Just be aware that it is often getting the little things right that leads to people trusting you with the bigger things, helping to further you in your career.

Why can't naming my files correctly be easier?

Ask, and you shall receive. Our Director of Learner Support created the [File Name Generator](#). Simply plunk in your details and voila! The appropriate name for your file will be generated just like that.

That's not my name

A file is named incorrectly if the name on your file does not match your registered name in D2L. If you would like to change your name in D2L, please email cpamodule@cpawsb.ca. Of note, your name in D2L does not necessarily need to match your legal name; contact CPAWSB if you would like to change

your name and have supporting documentation.

Choose your battles

Alrighty, so we are almost at the end of the “why” behind the importance of correct file naming. Still not convinced and ready to write a letter about it? If this is you, I have one last discussion point.

Oftentimes candidates admit later that they found a policy particularly annoying or frustrating and when the module wrapped up, reflected and realized complaining about the policy was actually how they voiced frustration with something unrelated. This [program is hard enough](#), so ask yourself how will objecting to this policy help you? If you want to provide your thoughts, CPAWSB wants to hear from you, and has mechanisms in place to receive your feedback to make improvements to the program.



COLLABORATION, SHARING, AND COMPARING: WHAT'S OKAY?

Author: CPAWSB

At CPAWSB, we encourage students and candidates to collaborate. This means supporting each other by explaining and discussing concepts. You might find that some of your best learning happens when you explain something to someone else because in crafting your explanation you synthesize the information and deepen your own understanding.

Collaboration does not mean sharing assignment responses—that's cheating, and when you get caught, can lead to being withdrawn from the course or module, or other penalties. Use these tips to navigate the difference between collaborating and cheating:

1. Find a study buddy.

Working through assignments while sitting beside someone can be helpful. Not only can you ask each other questions, you can keep each other accountable by setting break and study times.

What to avoid: splitting responses between you and submitting each other's work.

2. Discuss freely.

If you can explain the concept to someone else, in your own words, or if you take notes while discussing the concept with someone else, you're learning. And it doesn't need to be face-to-face. You can use the discussion board in D2L to ask for clarification, or respond to someone else's request with your explanation.

What to avoid: copying content from the discussion board in your response.

3. Do the work.

In other words, complete your own response. If you give your notes or assignment to someone else, you are

enabling them to cheat. If you use someone else's notes or response, you are cheating.

What to avoid: giving or receiving notes and assignments (partial or complete.)

Consider these examples, where part of your assignment is to make estate planning recommendations:

Example A:

You discuss a few ideas with your study partner and respond to a discussion board posting from someone else seeking clarification about the tax implications of a particular suggestion. When you prepare your assignment, you refer to notes that you made while speaking with your study buddy and read through the other answers to the discussion board question. These inform your work, but you are careful to ensure that the interpretations you provide are entirely your own.

Example B:

You are pressed for time so you look at notes given to you by a friend and use her list of suggestions in your answer. You scan the discussion board for other ideas and paste a well-worded explanation in your response. You add an introduction and submit the response.

In Example A, you have collaborated, contributing your own suggestions to the discussion board and in your conversation with your study buddy. You used your own notes, and crafted your own response. In Example B, you have cheated by using notes given to you by someone else and copying information from the discussion board without demonstrating your own understanding.



CPA COPYRIGHT MATERIALS: WHEN SHARING IS NOT CARING

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Confession time: I am an only child. My default action is not to share. I was socialized later in life to share scissors, snacks, and smiles in order to “pass” first grade. I digress.

Collaboration is cool

CPAWSB [encourages candidates to collaborate](#). That is not what this post wishes to explore. Rather, I will discuss the difference between plagiarism and copyright, and how to ensure CPAWSB learners adhere to the professional standards and proper use of CPA Preparatory Courses and CPA PEP materials.

Define and determine

Merriam-Webster states plagiarism is the stealing ideas and passing them off as their own without appropriate attribution, while defining copyright as, “the exclusive legal right to reproduce, publish, sell, or distribute the matter and form of something (such as a literary, musical, or artistic work).” Using CPA Canada’s eBook in a submission without referencing would be considered plagiarism; distributing a CPA PEP solution in a group chat, even if all of the participants were likely CPAWSB candidates, would be considered copyright violation.

Examining examples

Did you know that it is never okay to share your assignment with another student? Prior to your submission, sharing your work product could be violation of plagiarism rules; once you have submitted your assignment that word product becomes CPA copyrighted material. Candidates do not have the authority to distribute copyright materials to anyone without prior and explicit permission to do so. When it comes to third-party tutor or material sharing websites (such as Course Hero), receiving and submitting work that is not your own would be considered plagiarism, while sharing CPA materials would be considered copyright violation.

Penalty and punishment

Violations of plagiarism and copyright result in learners breaching their CPAWSB agreement, the documents signed when registering for CPAWSB courses. Penalties may include, and are not limited to, failure in CPA courses/modules (need to repeat the entire course/module), an approved ethics course successfully passed through a recognized Post-Secondary Institution, suspension, or even expulsion.

Ask before you act

Not sure if your action is permitted? Post a question to your facilitator, discussion board, or email outreach@cpawsb.ca. Simply not knowing you are violating a policy is insufficient and you will be held responsible for your actions. Each provincial body has its own Rules of Professional Conduct and you are held to the same standards as CPA members. If you become aware of someone who is using materials in an

unauthorized way (plagiarism) or sharing CPA copyright materials (copyright violation), you are obligated to share this information with CPAWSB by contacting learningstandards@cpawsb.ca.

Reinforcing reminder

Our ability to serve the public interest as CPAs comes from always doing the right thing when no one is watching and unlikely to find out about our naughty or negligent actions. Do not disrespect yourself, your hard work, or the profession you are working hard to be a part of by violating policy and standards.

Friendly finale

For those of you keeping score, we want to maintain the lessons learned earlier in life (sharing scissors and smiles) and add in a few items that are not meant to be shared: Samantha's snacks and CPA copyright materials.



CANDIDATE BEST PRACTICE: PART 1 - ADVICE TO PREVENT A PROFESSIONAL CATASTROPHE

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

As a CPA Candidate, you are bound by the Rules of Professional Conduct, just as a CPA would be. Given our CPA profession is self-regulated, it is logical a core element of that Code is integrity. Below is some advice, evidence, and replies for you to consider when drafting communication with integrity to any person.

In the first part of this two-part mini-series on Candidate Best Practices when it comes to demonstrating effective enabling skills, I will be discussing what NOT to do on the discussion boards. In Part 2, I will suggest why it is in your best interest to work on your enabling skills and some tips on how to manage your development as a professional.

As CPAWSB's Lead Policy Advisor, PEP, I love interacting with facilitators and candidates via our global discussion boards. It truly is a great place to solve problems, explore technical application, and firm up our understanding of all matters policy. Sometimes though, it gets a little 'spicy' out there.

Advice Received

When I first started a more public stakeholder-facing role with CPAWSB, I remembered a piece of advice one of my

management school professors taught us: "If you wouldn't want what you said/done/written posted on the front page of the news, do not do it."

Similar advice may be offered to candidates: It isn't always what you say and do, but how you say and do it.

As a CPA in this role, I have to use my communication skills professionally. My expectation is that you do the same. Let's look at a few sample posts to discuss how NOT to post.

Anecdotal Evidence

Here are some near-examples of messages posted:

#1 Webcam Allergy

I heard we have to keep our cameras on during the workshop - I REFUSE! There is no way this is fair, and it is not acceptable

to have us keep the camera on us THE ENTIRE TIME!!! [...] And why do I have to put it on? You can SEE INSIDE MY HOUSE – THAT IS AN INVASION OF PRIVACY.

Sam's Reply:

Given your face would have been shown during an in-person session and you would have been visible the entire time during that session, I fail to see how this is any different. Further, should you need to excuse yourself during the virtual session, similar to how you would do in an in-person workshop, you may get up and leave. We are adults in a professional program and are not minute-counting reasonable washroom or cell phone breaks.

As far as privacy, CPAWSB permits candidates and session leaders to use virtual backgrounds, so there is no need to share anything more than you would, had you been at an in-person workshop. Also, are all those CAPS because you think I cannot hear you? Perhaps if you turned on your webcam, it would help us communicate better...

I encourage you to reflect on why you feel this is an appropriate tone in the context of a professional program. Your goal is to become a self-regulated professional, which requires communicating in all instances: respectfully; appropriately; and with an accurate understanding of the law.

#2 I love-hate accounting

This program is too hard! The requirements are NOT reasonable. There is no way anyone can do this case in one hour. This is \$#^%\$!

Sam's reply:

This is a [challenging program](#). Many have felt similar to you and have become CPAs. It is essential to utilize your [CPA PEP resources](#) and focus on a [manageable plan](#), while acknowledging this program is difficult. That said, please remember that this is a discussion board used by hundreds, if not thousands of CPA candidates, where the best use of this resource is to focus on technical course material and policy-related matters. Should you wish to discuss strategies to make this program more manageable, I suggest contacting learnersupport@cpawsb.ca.

And if it is simply a case of “I don't-feel-like-its” – I get that too. Consider replenishing [your motivation](#) with [some self-care](#).

The end (for now)

Part of this program is designed to replicate challenges you will face in your career as a self-regulated professional. Often, the public – clients, employers, or stakeholders – will expect more of you than you believe to be reasonable. Your abilities will be tested once you are a CPA as well. In Part 2 of this series, I will suggest why it is in your best interest to work on your enabling skills and some tips on managing your development as a professional.

CANDIDATE BEST PRACTICE: PART 2 - ADVICE TO PREVENT A PROFESSIONAL CATASTROPHE

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In the first part of this two-part mini-series on Candidate Best Practices when it comes to demonstrating effective enabling skills, I discussed what candidates should not be writing or sharing on the discussion boards. Here in Part 2, I will suggest why it is in your best interest to work on your enabling skills and some tips on how to manage your development as a professional.

Enabling Skills

Here are two reasons why demonstrating a professional tone on the discussion boards is in your best interest:

1. Because it's your job:

Seriously, as a CPA PEP candidate, and as yourself—the human seeking out a professional designation in a self-regulated profession—it is not just the lessons we teach you directly about debits and credits, it's bigger than that. How are you going to operate when things go wrong? Deadlines missed, budgets blown, sleep a fleeting memory? THAT is the representation and expectation of what a CPA can do. Yes, we operate efficiently and effectively to ensure bad things don't happen. Still, when they do, we step up and solve them. Professionally.

2. You never know who may be reading your post:

Canadian accounting and business is a small world. We work in industry, government, firms, and outside of traditional finance and accounting. Your CPAWSB-leads and facilitators all went through the same or similar designation program, and many of us stayed in touch with our peers. While the candidate guide reminds you of discussion board etiquette, I hope this post reminds you of something more significant: contributing positively to the future you will one day be leading.

Learning Lifelong Lessons

I suggest if you find yourself getting annoyed and angry, write the post you think you want to make in a Word document, save it to your desktop, and



sleep on it. Upon waking, read it, and if you still want to post it knowing it represents both the professional you are and the CPA you aspire to be, go ahead and post.

Should mention this is advice I give myself and am still working on. Recently someone I interacted with blew a deadline by a few weeks—without prior communication—and within their tardy reply, had a time-sensitive request. I insta-replied with an email that I soon wished I would have slept on. Was I unprofessional? Not quite, though I wish I had taken the time to wrap my disappointed message in nicer words which is what I would have done had I slept on it. Was I in the right? Perhaps. Does it matter? Not really. There is always an opportunity to choose kindness and to balance honesty with harshness.

I will see you on the discussion boards!

Matt Lind, CPA

Matt Lind, CPA was presented with the Exemplary New Professional Award in 2018.

Matt never planned on going into accounting, but it was a friend who made the decision for him. Matt saw potential in an accounting career, and ultimately pursued his designation. The highlight of his time as a candidate in the CPA Professional Education Program was working through Capstone 1 and 2. Matt enjoyed interacting with people from different firms in a team environment, writing cases and being able to master his technical skills for the CFE. Matt's advice for anyone starting the CPA program would be to prepare for the road ahead.

“CPA PEP is a challenging-but rewarding-program. Take a couple of months to become familiar with your job and gain some comfort that becoming a CPA is the right move to elevate your career.”

FINDING A TUTOR PART 1: WHAT'S A TUTOR AND WHY USE ONE?

Author: CPAWSB

Tutors can be a valuable part of your education team. In this tutoring mini-series, we highlight why and when to use a tutor. Next month we'll cover what to look for in a tutor, where to find one, and how to become one if you've passed the CFE or are a CPA.

What is a tutor?

Tutors are individuals who are familiar with CPA education programs, have relevant educational or professional backgrounds, and are willing to provide paid tutoring services to learners. Typically, tutors are CPA members, post-secondary educators, and/or recent successful CFE writers. Tutors are not paid by CPAWSB to provide tutoring services. Instead, the learner and tutor negotiate their relationship.

Why use a tutor?

While it is not required to engage a tutor to find success in CPA PEP, some learners find using the tutoring services beneficial in their learning experience. Some learners engage with tutors for support with the following:

- In-depth discussion of a technical topic
- Assisting with the debrief process

- Receiving advice on case reading and outlining
- Reviewing facilitator feedback
- Seeking additional case marking and feedback

When to use a tutor?

Preparation is an essential part of CPA PEP, and a tutor can be an excellent resource to ensure smooth sailing when the module starts. Here are some best practices to begin module preparation by using a tutor:

1. Intro to PEP - Syllabi:

- Review the syllabus readings in Knotia for your upcoming CPA PEP module and note any challenging areas where you may want additional help from your tutor.
- Identify submission deadlines and consider scheduling a tutor session afterwards to assist with debriefing.

2. Intro to Capstone 2:

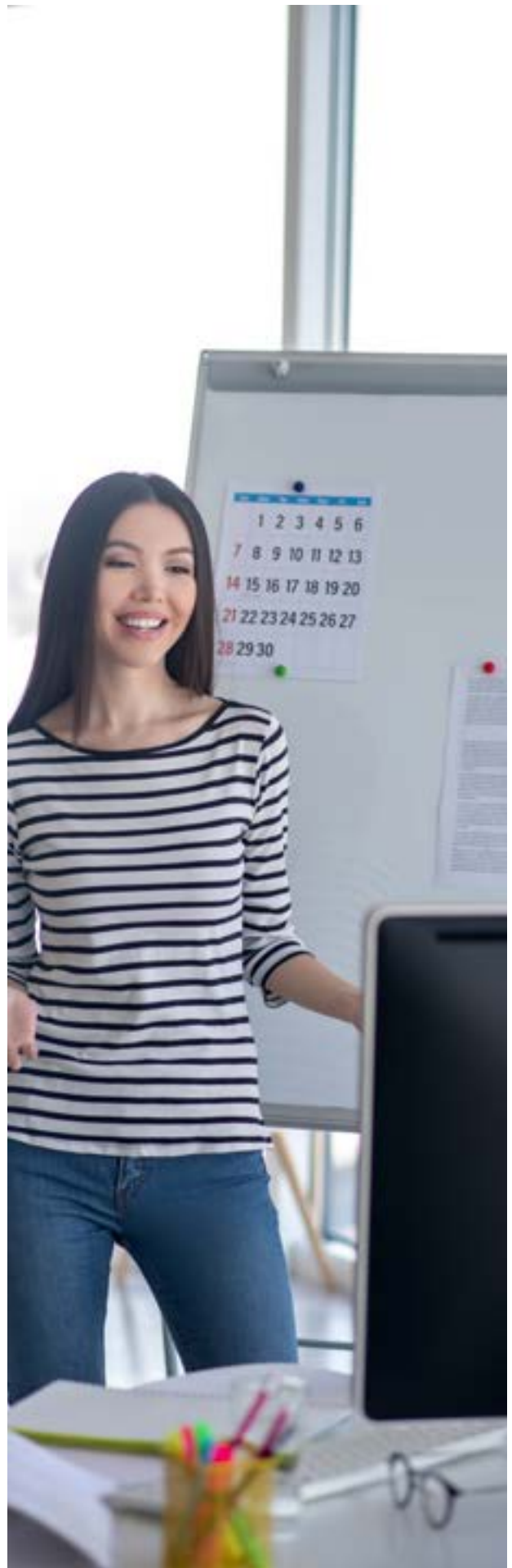
- Review the study plan and related Knotia readings and identify any technical topics where you may benefit from additional support.
- Review the Capstone 2 calendar and consider using the tutoring services to assist in case debriefing, or to provide marking and feedback for non-submitted cases.
- Consider engaging a tutor for additional marking and feedback on the three 'Additional Practice Cases'.

Crystal Workun, B.Sc., CPA, CMA

Crystal Workun, B.Sc., CPA, CMA was presented with the David Inhaber Distinguished Facilitator Award. The recipient of the award is selected by the CPAWSB and is recognized for their exemplary contribution to furthering CPAWSB's education objectives.

Crystal's advice for someone starting the CPA program?

"YOU CAN DO IT!!! As I'm also a session leader, I get the chance to meet candidates at the Orientation Workshop in Core 1. Candidates are usually pretty nervous starting the program and sometimes have heard (scary) stories about how difficult the program is. I like to remind candidates that getting through their undergrad and making it to the CPA PEP program means they deserve to be here, and there are so many great facilitators, session leaders and mentors to help them on the journey. The program will not be easy - but it will be worth it!"



FINDING A TUTOR PART 2: WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Author: CPAWSB

In Part 1 of this tutoring mini-series, we outlined what a tutor is and why and when to use one. Below, in the final part of our series, we cover what to look for and where to find a tutor, as well as instructions for CPAs and recent CFE writers looking to become tutors.

What to look for in a tutor?

When reaching out to a tutor, first identify what you require from the relationship. By clearly communicating your needs to a tutor, you can help a prospective tutor assess whether they are right for you. Do you need help in-person or are you willing to meet online? Do you prefer individual attention, or would you be willing to meet with a group? How much time do you expect the tutor to dedicate to the relationship, and how much are you willing to spend (per hour or in total)?

After you have clearly communicated your needs, see how the prospective tutor responds. Do they respond quickly? Did you like their communication style? Did they provide references or any other information on their tutoring experience? Are they willing to have a conversation about your needs? If a prospective tutor is meeting your needs while being interviewed, this is a good sign that this might be the tutor for you!

Where to find tutors?

1. Personal network

The easiest and most convenient way to begin a tutor search is to investigate your own personal network. Do you have a peer who has successfully completed the CFE? Is there a family friend who is aware of CPA PEP, or one who has accounting experience?

2. Professional network

Your employer and professional network can be a tremendous resource that you can leverage for support. Does your employer have a mentoring or tutoring program, or provide referrals to tutors that staff have used in the past? Is there a co-worker who is ahead of you in the program, or has completed the program?

3. CPAWSB Tutor Community

In January 2019, CPAWSB introduced Tutor Community, an initiative to help tutors more effectively engage with and meet the needs of learners. Tutors in the CPAWSB Tutor Community are required to attend an in-person or online orientation webinar, and then successfully complete an orientation quiz.

The CPAWSB Learner Support team posts information on how to obtain a list of tutors in the CPAWSB Tutors Community into each CPA PEP module newsfeed at the start of each module. Additionally, a reminder is posted before the examination.

The [Tutoring webpage](#) within the [Learner Support area of the CPAWSB website](#) contains additional information about CPAWSB tutors. Additionally, learners can request the CPAWSB tutor list any time from the Learner Support team at learnersupport@cpawsb.ca.

4. Get Creative!

Tutors and CPA PEP support are everywhere! For example, consider reaching out to your local CPA Chapter to see if they offer tutoring support, or host networking or ‘speed-dating’ events to aid in finding the perfect tutor for you. Here are some links to help you find your local CPA Chapter:

- [CPA British Columbia Chapters](#)
- [CPA Alberta Chapters](#)

How to become a tutor?

If you are a CPA member, post-secondary, or professional educator, or a recent successful CFE writer, you may wish to become a tutor. To submit a request to become a CPAWSB tutor, visit the [Tutor Opportunities page](#) on the CPAWSB website.

Note: CPAWSB does not administer any tutoring arrangements, and the tutoring relationships are established directly between the learner and the tutor. Tutoring services will have associated costs, as determined by each tutor.

Disclaimer: CPAWSB is not responsible for the integrity or quality of tutors or administering any fees or outstanding payments. CPAWSB is not involved beyond training CPAWSB tutors and providing the initial listing of qualified tutors to learners.

If you have questions, contact the Learner Support team at learnersupport@cpawsb.ca.

Erica Smith, CPA, CA,

Erica Smith, CPA, CA, was presented with the KBH Facilitator Award,

After Erica completed her designation in 2006, she looked for opportunities to share her knowledge. Starting with the School as an online facilitator in 2007, Erica has been teaching since. She now works as a session leader and instructor in the Master of Professional Accounting (MPAcc) program at the University of Saskatchewan.

Erica is amazed by the diversity of experience among candidates. They come from a variety of industries and backgrounds and this diversity leads to excellent conversations, making the profession more well-rounded.

MENTORSHIP: THIS IS COFFEE

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

A hunter and a vegetarian walk into a boardroom for an interview that would lead to the start of my accounting career. I will get to that, but first I want to discuss mentorship.

What is a mentor?

[Harvard Education \(2015\)](#) broadly defines the mentor-mentee relationship as a mutual investment of time and energy that complements personal and professional development. In CPA PEP, formal mentorship in the form of a “CPA Mentor” is a required part of completing the [CPA PEP Practical Experience Requirements](#).

A mentor may be a formal overseer of your work, someone who satisfies your professional education requirements, your mentor may also be the person who helps polish your business acumen. Without my mentor, I would have continued to answer that pesky interview question, “what is your greatest strength” by describing my ability to demolish a larger competitor on the rugby pitch.

What a mentor is not

A mentor is not someone who:

- Judges or discourages you; as CPAs, we ought to [use our power positively](#),
- Has all the answers, though a mentor may be a part of the mentees’ [active reflection process](#),
- Knows what is on the examination, though you may refer to [exam-specific guidance](#).

The value of a mentor

[This journey is difficult](#). Despite [several well-curated resources](#), candidates often get frustrated with the transition from post-secondary undergraduate learning to graduate-level education. A mentor may offer perspective or perhaps a virtual “pat on the shoulder”. They may email to let you know they too have at times have struggled while acknowledging they are now stronger having endured those difficult times. A mentor may provide you practical tips and resources for support to best navigate those difficult times now

While mentors may offer support, guidance, and motivation, it is David Foster Wallace who reminds us we possess the knowledge, the ability to learn and know, and the freedom to decide what to think about. Candidates, you are more powerful than you may think.

Where to find your mentor:

At work

Many offices support CPA learners with a formal mentorship program. Even if there is not a formal network in place, your workplace may employ someone who is looking to give back to the profession and is more than happy to support your pursuit of a CPA designation.

Outside the office

Get creative! It could be a CPA you volunteer with, play together on a sports team, or a connection via LinkedIn. Yes, in this COVID-19 environment there are some limitations to in-person social

interactions however at the same time, it has been the experience of many of my colleagues and learners that people have been open and available more now than ever to meet for a virtual coffee.

Retain a match-maker

CPA Canada offers a [CPA Mentor Match](#) program for learners to complete their experience requirements.

Do not discount good fortune: Serendipity may offer a mentor in other ways not discussed here. Candidates and educators who found their mentor through other means, what is your story?

Great, you found a mentor. Now how do you “keep” them?

Simple. Thank them and occasionally offer to buy them coffee.

A hunter and a vegetarian walk into a boardroom. Fifteen years later, two Chartered Professional Accountants walk out.

Thank you, Rodney.



EXPERIENCED FACILITATOR WORKSHOPS: WHAT DO THEY DO?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

For a group of individuals to be defined as a community, participants are committed to a common goal that gives them unity, while collaborating in an interactive manner, with general agreed-upon procedures, where individuals are responsible for their contributions towards the community's shared goal (Case and Balcaen, p. 89, 2008)¹.

In recent months, the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) hosted several in-person, an online, and a recorded version of 2019 Experienced Facilitator Training. This training brought together online facilitators to refine and hone their skills to further the School's mission to deliver the preeminent business and accounting education to candidates and students.

In 2019, CPA Canada introduced data analytics to its competency map, the document that defines the competencies expected of tomorrow's CPAs and from which education and exams are

developed. Consistent with the principles we are teaching, the training was designed with the assistance of data analytics to address the needs and wants of online educators, candidates, and various other CPAWSB stakeholders, by way of "medium data" (a play on words for 'big data'), to ensure the School's educators remain at the forefront of accounting education.

The half-day sessions provided space for trainees to connect in Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver in a physical location during the Winter months. The sessions focused on emotional intelligence, the significance of communication, the importance of getting buy-in and working smarter, not harder without sacrificing effectiveness by using data strategically. We also discussed how to measure the positive reinforcement of our positive impacts through a tool we referred to as the "smile file." We delved into the subjects of vulnerability and the importance of integrating accurate assessments and professional judgment. We co-developed methods for crafting and refining value-added feedback. Intertwined throughout this packed session were

¹ Case, R., & Balcaen, P. (2008). "Supporting a community of critical thinkers." In: Case, R. & Clark, P. (Eds.). *The Anthology of Social Studies: Issues and Strategies for Elementary Educators*, Pacific Educational Press, Vancouver.

tangible examples of trips to big-box stores and yoga studios to parallel the lessons of education.

Oh, and don't worry. It wasn't all hard-core data and accounting co-mingled into a snooze-fest; we embraced levity. Each session commenced with "Fun - and unexpected - Facts" about the participants and the hosts. We learned that our facilitators are risk takers (too many stories of motorcycles, travel experiences, and adventure sports to name!), childhoods growing up in interesting family businesses, and facilitators who raise chickens and bees!

Trust yet verify, CPAs certainly aren't boring.

Learning is multi-faceted; at the School, CPA PEP modules are delivered blended online and in-person. These training sessions made clear that educators, regardless of their platform, care. We voluntarily step out of our comfort zones and continue to embrace the vulnerability of being learners ourselves.

At CPAWSB, we are educators who learn and grow together to educate tomorrow's CPAs.

We are Community.



NEW FACILITATOR TRAINING: VIRTUAL EDITION, PART 1

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

If you're nearing the end of your CPA studies, you may be thinking about sitting on the other side and becoming a facilitator. What exactly does New Facilitator training look like? Before COVID-19, it was similar to [Experienced Facilitator Workshops](#), except focused on training and policy best practices, assuming trainees know very little about delivering CPA PEP.

This past winter, Kami, Nikki, and I taught our first training session since the shift to a completely virtual environment. While we have led sessions together in the past, this was the first time we presented them virtually.

What was the same?

The content!

Online facilitation best practices, national and regional policies were addressed in depth. We used training coaches (highly-ranked experienced facilitators) to work with smaller groups of trainees, which allowed for a 6:1 interaction between trainees and experienced facilitators. The training was consistent with previous sessions: General format: mini-lectures, group activities, solo activities, and large group debriefs.

Trainee evaluation

Before attending the session, trainees must complete pre-work, including a pre-session quiz. At the beginning of the session, trainees are advised their training coaches are evaluating their participation. Trainees must complete a post-session submission representing the marking of a "real candidate". The combined score of those activities determines whether a trainee becomes a CPAWSB contractor.

What was different?

The preparation

Our first step in preparing for the virtual sessions was to take in-person training materials to adapt them to online delivery. We wanted to ensure the material flowed and the activities were impactful. Breakout rooms were used to mimic the "table discussions" while virtual broadcasts simulated our warning messages that the lecture portion was to resume shortly.

NEW FACILITATOR TRAINING: VIRTUAL EDITION, PART 2

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Social interaction

When delivering the virtual training for new online facilitators, Kami, Nikki, and I made sure to provide moments where trainees could participate, communicate, share, inquire, and learn, and the formal learning interactions occurred as expected. What was missing were the impromptu social experiences that typically happen naturally when a group of like-minded individuals gathers. My colleague at Dalhousie University, [Dr. Colin Conrad](#), is an interdisciplinary scholar who researches how our brains work with information technology. He discussed evidence that supports why MOOCs (massive open online courses with thousands of participants often without personalized instructor interaction) fail to graduate most learners: A lack of social presence and a [failure to manage](#) mind wandering.

While CPA PEP provides online and

virtual learning, we differ from MOOCs in our tailored approach to building a professional and social connection between educator and learner. CPA PEP was built on a foundation to connect learners and educators. Connection is supported by leveraging online and blended learning elements including: Lead Facilitators for each module who bring their unique personalities to their posts, Online Facilitators provide value-added feedback in addition to the technical application including through active learning activities (including the asynchronous module workshops), case-writing coaching, session leaders delivering virtual or in-person workshops, the competitive hiring process to become a CPAWSB educator, [mentor program](#) to ensure strong educator performance, and learnersupport@cpaweb.ca who is available to provide tailored one-on-one coaching for candidates who would like additional support.

Your facilitators care

Question: Candidates, have you ever wondered why your facilitator sends you an introductory email at the beginning of the module, filled with a biography and sharing their interests, encouraging you to do the same?

Facilitators want you to enjoy your time with us. We want to start building rapport and earn your trust that we have your best interests in mind when we provide positive and constructive feedback. Chia and Holt (2008) discuss [how a student is presented material](#) is equally as important as the content; “infectious enthusiasm” supports a learner’s connection between the technical material and their lived experience, which impacts whether the student considers the material useful or relevant. Facilitators and candidates who have a social connection are leveraging processes established by CPAWSB and CPA PEP to achieve professional goals and growth.

Take-aways

This past year-plus has been difficult. As we begin to navigate to a “new normal” yet again, we are proud of what we have done to keep our program operating. We can also tweak and adjust and continue to improve. For example, upcoming facilitator webinars (mini-training sessions Nikki and I host before each module offering begins) will include a relaxed Q&A, optional on-camera and microphone enabled “free for all”. Novel? Hardly. As someone who puts social engagements in her work calendar, I recognize the value of holding space to invite unplanned fun.

We are what we teach: Resilient problem-solvers committed to delivering the preeminent business and accounting education to candidates and students.

We are CPAWSB.



CAREER PROGRESSION, PART 1: THE END, A NEW BEGINNING

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Career progression. How can someone harness the power of their education? When should one move on? In this three-part mini-series, I will explore the theme of career progression. First, I'll discuss why quitting is essential to growth, then how to set yourself up for growth, and conclude with exploring the bigger picture of a CPA and lifestyle design.

Metaphor Soup

Traditionally, career progression has been referred to as “climbing the corporate ladder”, while recent metaphors include a [jungle gym](#) and [coloured parachutes](#). Except, what happens when you don't know if you want a ladder, jungle gym, or parachute?

I often speak on this blog about policy and enabling competencies: Policy, the “hard line” of administrative matters, while enabling competencies acting as the “soft skill” complement to business language. At some point all new CPAs will have fulfilled relatively similar entry-level requirements: education, work experience, evaluative. What differentiates you as a CPA is not what you know, but how well you communicate what you know. The “soft” stuff.

Before I dive into practical solutions on how to maximize your CPA PEP education, I would first like to bring

attention to the step before career progression: “quitting”. Moving on from where you are currently at.

Quitting...

- **Can be hard:** At some point, it is likely you will want to take your designation and open some of the doors you have created for yourself. I recall early on in my career when my colleagues learned I was leaving they were less than supportive or was that my projection of their reaction?
- **Not always optional:** Economic circumstances may lead to layoffs. A lapse in performance or a misaligned skillset may lead to termination. A contract is not renewed. Own it, learn from it, and try not to take it personally.
- **Sounds awful:** Except it doesn't have to be. I recently received an email resignation from a lovely human I used to work with on an ongoing

project I lead outside CPAWSB. It was gracious, thankful, and confident. She and her contributions will be missed, but it is the right thing for the project because it is the right thing for her.

Time to reframe

Consider quitting the mindset of quitting as a “bad” thing. A colleague once told me it is okay to leave a role because you were once happy to take the position and are now making room for someone else to step into their next opportunity.

*Closing time, every new beginning
Comes from some other
beginning's end,*

— Semisonic
Closing Time

Fiona Lee CPA, CA

Fiona Lee CPA, CA was presented with the 2021 KBH Facilitator award for the CPAWSB.

She has been a CPA facilitator since 2016 with CPAWSB.

“Post designation I decided to focus on Tax, which is something I developed passion for during my study days. I had worked in public practice for about four years before transitioning to the current position. For the last three years I have been working at a global tax team of an international public company.”

Learn more about Fiona’s CPA Journey

[Watch video](#)



CAREER PROGRESSION, PART 2: CREATE VALUE

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA



Mindset shift: YOU are a business

We know businesses with multiple sources of income tend to be less “risky”. Ideally, those streams of income complement the natural business cycle, like a landscaper who in the winter, plows snow. As CPAs, we analyze the health of a business, [conclude and advise](#) ways to mitigate risks, yet why do so many of us choose to focus all of our efforts on one source of income?

It is time to talk about practical steps to make the most of where you are, then build on it.

Maximize your current situation

Consider engaging in [Intrapreneurship](#). You can start by creating a new data analytics dashboard and work up to creating a new month-end close macro. Without internal innovations, the [world may not have Post-Its](#) or Gmail. If your current company does not recognize these efforts, place them on your resume and know your next employer will.

Build skills while helping

Part-time consulting

Consulting is helping. If someone has accounting questions and you have answers, share them. Don't know something? Admit it, offer to look into it and get back to them. Forget making it transactional and simply help when you can. If you have taken the steps above to treat yourself as a business, you will have time to build relationships, some of which may turn your helpful conversations into bank-able invoices.

Volunteer work

We have unique skillsets as CPAs: financial literacy. We can review financial statements and see business stories. There are many non-profit boards who could benefit from your expertise, and in turn, offer you a chance to "level-up" your skillset. These skills can be communicated to future employers and clients.

Consider your "why"

As a CPA candidate, [you are choosing](#) to devote evenings and weekends to weekly readings, quizzes, practice cases, and integrated problems to [prepare for a series of exams](#) that culminate in a [three-day marathon exam](#).

What will your investment of efforts be, what doors will you smash through? Where will you take yourself as you journey through your career progression?

*Closing time, open all the doors
And let you out into the world*

— Semisonic
Closing Time

Kathleen Gerber, CPA

Kathleen Gerber, CPA was presented the 2020 Exemplary New Professional award.

Kathleen's path to CPA designation

"I didn't know when starting post-secondary education that I wanted to become a CPA. It took trying out some different classes to figure out what I enjoyed learning. Business classes attracted me to the challenge of accounting. I did my first co-op term in an accounting/finance role, which led me to start looking into the CPA designation and ultimately, I decided to pursue it.

I attended the Israel Harold Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba, where I enrolled in the Asper Co-op Program. I began working at Canada Life (formally Great-West Life) in January 2015, completing two co-op terms in Corporate Financial Reporting and Information Services Financial Management.

After finishing my bachelor of commerce (honours) degree, I started with Canada Life full-time in 2017 and began CPA PEP courses, completing two 15-month rotations working in Corporate Financial Reporting and Internal Audit. Canada Life also offered an excellent training program that helped me be successful in all my modules.

As it is important to give back, I volunteer with CPA Manitoba as a guest speaker to prospective candidates by sharing my career journey and how the designation has benefitted me."

CAREER PROGRESSION, PART 3: MOVING ON

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

The first part of this series discussed reframing “quitting” with the second part focusing on skills development. This final post will discuss how to put it all together.

Closing time, you don't have to go home... But you can't stay here

— Semisonic
Closing Time

Great! You are confidently solving problems and helping others. Your inbox has activity, your calendar is starting to fill up. What now?

Say “yes...”

As discussed in [Part 2](#) of this series, say yes and volunteer, consult, add value within your organization. Build your skillset and say yes to offers when they come in. When a project is done, request feedback, reflect, learn, and take those lessons into your next project.

...Until you can't

We each have our limits, and it's important to know when we can tap into our energy reserves and when we must replenish them. The advice I follow is to say “yes” until I no longer am excited about saying “yes”. My lack of enthusiasm indicates I either had too much on the go, or it isn't the right

opportunity for me.

Know and respect your limits. [You are the expert of you.](#)

Choose your stress

Popular author [Mark Manson asks us how we'd like to suffer](#). As a new CPA, I chose to work, consult, teach, and volunteer to focus on building skills. I also travelled internationally and had hobbies. Once I attained some preliminary goals, I started to pull back on fixed work commitments and now have more autonomy with how I choose to invest my time. Nowadays, the types of opportunities that excite me look different than ten years ago and that is a-okay.

You are not your “CPA”

Some CPAs choose to actively use their CPA designations in roles deemed “traditional accounting positions” while others will transition into other roles. Please do not worry, you will always have those analytical skills, critical thinking, and business acumen you honed studying to become a CPA.

Warren Buffet refers to accounting as the language of business. I encourage you to see your fluency as a tool, a way to add value and communicate, rather than one path. Many CPAs leverage their designation into different fields such as project management, education, real estate development, senior leadership, and entertainment, to name a few. My point: you have options.

Lifestyle Design

Harvard Business Review (2006) discussed while it is accurate to say [more choices yield a better objective result](#), participants reported feeling a decrease in their subjective experience. Participants were unsure if they'd made the right decision because there were so many other choices that could have been made. It is a paradox of choice: we are better off for more options, yet don't always feel like it.

Rather than be frustrated by science, I choose to see the "paradox of choice" as freeing: with so many choices there is no wrong move. If you find yourself no longer aligned with that decision, that's okay! You can take your experience and skills and select another choice. You have put yourself in a position to take advantage of your abundance of opportunity.

No master plan?

You are in good company. I still don't know "what I want to be when I grow up" and I turned thirty-five in June. Over afternoon chilled beverages many of my accomplished friends and colleagues admit much of the same. Don't stress. Our brains are masters at [creating a story that will make our career paths look more intentional](#) than perhaps they were.

As discussed: by becoming a CPA and earning yourself more career options, you will be statistically better off. Enjoy the ride, your hard work, and concentrate on contributing to a life for yourself and those you care about.

Edward Goodfellow, CPA, CA

Edward Goodfellow, CPA, CA was presented the CPAWSB Contractor Recognition Award to recognize his notable and positive impact on his students and his dedication to excellence in his role as a facilitator for the CPA preparatory courses.

He started with general studies at the University of Calgary, and after attending a "day-in-the-life" event at the Calgary Deloitte office, he knew that accounting was for him.

Edward quit his part-time job at Safeway, left the U of C and headed down to Lethbridge.

He found the University of Lethbridge to be the right fit for him, well-grounded in tax and finance. He accepted a job at KPMG in Victoria in 1990, successfully completed the UFE in 1992 and qualified for his designation in 1993.

He moved from the accounting world to the finance world while working with Phillips Hager & North. In 2001, Edward completed his Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation. Edward began teaching Finance part-time first at Camosun College in 2005 and then at Royal Roads University in 2007 where he continues to teach to this day. Edward began teaching for a CPA legacy program in 2008 and continues with the CPAWSB today.

CHOOSING CPA PEP ELECTIVES

Author: CPAWSB

Choosing CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) electives can seem daunting as the ones you choose can influence your CPA career path. Below we outline what to think about when making your choices.

Things to Consider

CPA PEP includes four elective options, and you are required to choose two. When you are deciding what to take, think about:

Your Strengths: Electives give you an opportunity to explore your areas of interest in further depth. You are more likely to be successful if you choose electives that you are interested in or proficient at. Consider your experience and the skills you have earned and how those skills might relate to an elective.

Your CFE Role: You are more likely to be successful on the CFE if you choose a role that corresponds with one of the electives you choose. Read more information on [electives and CFE roles](#).

Public Practice Licensing Requirements: To earn a license to practice public accounting as a partner or owner of a CPA public practice firm, you must either take both the assurance and taxation modules as your electives or complete the [Post-Designation Public Accounting \(PDPA\)](#) Program after you have finished

your CPA PEP education. Some employers may require that you complete the taxation and assurance modules.



Elective Module Overview

Performance management:

The objective of the [Performance Management module](#) is to equip you with the ability to:

- contribute to strategic decision making
- support effective governance
- manage and mitigate risk
- assess overall performance management

You will apply common frameworks for strategy, governance, risk and performance in more complex settings than dealt with previously, developing competencies used to focus an organization on:

- improving performance
- delivering sustainable value

Consider this elective if:

You are planning or interested in a management accounting role in your career

- You wish to be selected for a performance management role on Day 2 of the CFE

The [blueprint](#) provides you with information on what to expect from the examinations.

Finance:

The objective of the [Finance module](#) is to equip you with the ability to:

- develop overall finance policies
- identify, analyze, evaluate and recommend investment and financing decisions
- You will learn to apply the appropriate finance principles and conceptual approaches to determine appropriate courses of action. You

will also develop the capability to:

- provide finance-related services for an organization, either individually or as part of a larger team
- understand when the advice of a finance specialist is required
- understand and communicate with other finance professionals

Consider this elective if:

- You plan to pursue a career that provides investing and finance advice to organizations
- You wish to be selected for a finance role for Day 2 of the CFE

The [blueprint](#) provides you with information on what to expect from the examinations.

Assurance:

The objective of the [Assurance module](#) is to equip you with the competencies necessary to perform both internal audit projects and external assurance engagements, including:

- assessing the need for an engagement or project
- developing and performing procedures
- documenting and reporting results

Please note: If you plan to practise public accounting, this module is required.

Consider this elective if:

- You have any experience in assurance and would like to pursue it further. It is highly recommended that you have some experience in assurance to take the module
- You wish to work in assurance engagements or internal auditing in your career
- You are considering an assurance role for Day 2 of CFE

The [blueprint](#) provides you with information on what to expect from the examinations.

Taxation:

The objective of the [Taxation module](#) is to equip you with the competencies necessary to provide taxation services and guidance, including assisting individual and corporate entities to minimize taxes and meet their objectives while remaining in compliance with tax laws and regulations. You will:

- learn to address compliance and tax-planning issues for individuals and corporate entities, with some exposure to partnerships and trusts
- learn to go beyond presenting the issues and consider the broader circumstances and risk tolerance of all stakeholders involved
- develop competence in the areas of governance, controls and risk management by exploring the relationship between financial reporting decisions and taxation, and considering the importance of taxes when making business and investment decisions

Please note: If you plan to practise public accounting, this module is required.

Consider this elective if:

- You have experience in and would like to pursue tax as a career. It is recommended that you have some experience in tax when entering the module
- You would like to pursue a tax role for Day 2 of the CFE

The [blueprint](#) provides you with information on what to expect from the examinations.

For additional information, the [CPA Competency Map](#) and the CPA Knowledge Supplement cover details on the electives.

Adam Zanoni, CPA, CA

Adam Zanoni, CPA, CA, was presented CPAWSB CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) Facilitator Award, which recognizes facilitators who have had a notable and positive impact on their candidates and approach their role with a dedication to excellence.

Adam's CPA journey:

"At first, it seemed like a good fit as I had an interest in numerical analysis and business. But as I learned more about the designation, I was drawn to what seemed like the endless possibilities and options that would become available to me in my career.

I am an individual who likes to have options and flexibility. Having a designation that could allow me to work in everything from public practice to government in various capacities was a designation that I knew I had to get. Having this many options available to me meant that I could have more control over the life and career I wanted for my family and me."

MODULE FAST TRACK: IS IT FOR ME?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

The first question to answer before figuring out whether module fast track is for you is to define the issue at hand:

1. What is Fast Track?

Quite simply put, Fast Track is taking two modules at the same time. Check out the CPA PEP module schedule at www.cpawsb.ca. Candidates can take Core 1 and 2 at the same time, and if they are successful in completing both examinations, can proceed to take two Electives at the same time.

2. What are the restrictions?

When registering for the modules, ensure the exams are on different dates. You cannot write two exams on one day. The course content from Capstone 1 is used in Capstone 2, while Capstone 2 is case writing preparation to pass the CFE. This means you cannot Fast Track the Capstone modules.

3. Who does Fast Track work for?

Fast track works best for people who have limited work commitments. Many candidates completing Fast Track modules completed their undergraduate degrees in April and have full-time employment lined up to start in October. These candidates are keen to invest their

summer to studying to minimize the amount of time in the future they need to study while working.

4. What is the time commitment?

Each module requires 12-to-15 hours per week, not including any refreshing of pre-requisite material. This time commitment does not increase or decrease for candidates who choose to take concurrent modules.

5. What should I consider?

Consider using the following questions to assess whether you should Fast-Track your modules:

Do I have a minimum of 24-to-30 hours per week, each week?

Think about a busy week for you. Not your ideal week. Not what you wish and hope your weeks will look like. Open your calendar and match it up to the CPA PEP module schedule. Take a long hard look and be honest with yourself. If it feels like it will be too much, it probably will be. That's okay. Better to know now.

Am I working full time?

Last I checked, there are 168 hours in a week. When I completed my experience, I think my partners tried to bend the laws

of space and time to increase this, but no can do. Here's some math:

40 hours for work + 24 hours for modules + 49 for sleep = more than 67% of your available total time. That's not including any time for meal preparation or eating, commuting, and zero time allocated to mindlessly scrolling social media or catching up on Animal Kingdom on Netflix.

If this paragraph didn't send you into a panic, please continue.

Is my employer supportive of the fast-track option?

If they are not, I suggest finding out why. If your employer is still unsupportive after the discussion, consider taking the modules consecutively. Where possible, it important to have a happy and supportive work environment during this demanding journey.

Are people in my inner support network supportive of the fast-track option?

The same advice I provided above for a supportive workplace applies

here, perhaps even more so. This is a challenging program both for candidates and those who support candidates.

Does this fit into my career timeline and goals?

Candidates are required to complete their work experience and speeding up the education portion likely will not result in a candidate becoming a designated CPA any faster.

I'm torn and not sure what I should do, what do you think?

“If It's Not a H*ll Yes, It's a No”

— Derek Sivers.

My advice

Run YOUR race.

If after evaluating your work and personal commitments, quality of life, and sheer mental capacity, and are unsure of how to proceed, here is my suggestion: Don't Fast-Track.

Life is a journey, not a destination. There is no ultimate goal, rather a series of milestones where YOU choose what matters.



SUBMITTING TASKS AFTER REACHING 75% FOR EXAM ELIGIBILITY

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In CPA, PEP candidates must attain a 75 percent overall grade to write each [module final exam](#). Action on the discussion boards and in my inbox around weeks 6/7 (when candidates tend to achieve this score) focuses on whether candidates have to keep completing module activities.

To the competitors (athletes, gamers, musicians), I ask you this: Do you wish to participate, or would you like to “win” the module?

- **If you want to participate:** Focusing on the 75 percent exam eligibility score is a solid strategy.
- **If you want to “win” the module:** Develop your technical and enabling skills for the entirety of the module. Do not pause your efforts once your participation is confirmed.

Exam eligibility is the by-product of natural module progression

There is no need to “game” the system to maximize points (e.g., spending more time on practice cases). It is essential to write in exam-like conditions as there is no extra time on exam day. [Objection 4](#) noted in a previous post about practice

exams provides comfort if candidates remain skeptical: the math is in your favour when incurring a series of NAs, NCs, RCs on your practice cases.

Earning your 75 percent is a by-product of preparing for the exam; it need not be the goal.

But I want to focus on STUDYING!

Some candidates will continue to push, saying they wish to qualify for the module exam so they can stop submitting units (PCs, IPs, and MCQs) to “focus on studying for the final exam.”

What exactly does that mean? The technical in the module are parts of the exam material; by completing units 1 through 8, you are studying for the final exam.

Active learning is (effective) studying

Perhaps the issue is “doing” (completing activities) is not perceived as studying. Module activities are precisely the type of [active learning that combats mind-wandering](#) leading to effective knowledge retention.



Does reading or watching webinars equal active learning? It depends. Are you passively watching, or even writing notes that repeat, not interpret the messaging? Then no. Active learning requires the application of knowledge. What is unique about CPA PEP units is they include at least three active-learning opportunities: IP, PCs, and MCQs. Further, candidates receive tailored feedback (auto-graded MCQs and facilitator feedback on IPs and PCs) to ensure the “doing” is guided with accuracy.

What are the alternative actions?

To all the candidates who inquire whether they have to complete the units after achieving an overall course grade of 75 percent, my cheeky response that will never leave my inbox is “No, just like you do not have to pass the final exam.”

What I really want to convey is this: If you are not completing active-learning activities tailored to your exam success, what are you doing? If you are doing something else that will better serve you on exam day, I say go for it. You do not need my, or anyone else’s, permission to take ownership in your education; This is a graduate-level program where the onus is on you to take the steps necessary to achieve your goals.

Final thoughts

This process is exhausting with heaps of opportunity costs. But it’s worth it. Society does not pass out six-figure paychecks and international job opportunities to just anyone, so CPA will not pass just anyone.

Hard choices, easy life. Easy choices, hard life.

— Jerzy Gregorek
as tweeted by Tim Ferris, November 4, 2020

PICTURE THIS: DAIS & POWER BI

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

CPA Canada's [Foresight Initiative](#) sees the future contributions of CPAs as:

- measuring value beyond financials to capture societal expectations
- harnessing the power of vast quantities of data to make decisions and establishing new models of governance and decision-making
- developing new skills and competencies
- protecting integrity, trust and ethics

Given our profession's vision, intuition follows that candidates should see data analytics on the [Competency Map](#).

Below I will discuss FAQs related to data analytics information systems (hereafter: DAIS) and CPA PEP.

What tools do I need for DAIS?

Page 8 of [CPA Canada's PEP Candidate Guide](#) requires PowerBI and an operating system to support PowerBI to facilitate DAIS activities.

What modules do I need PowerBI for?

CPA PEP candidates will first see DAIS activities in Core 2's Integrative Problems. Elective modules all include PowerBI tasks. Capstone 1 candidate may choose to use PowerBI to demonstrate DAIS competencies to meet the DAIS

insights requirement in Part 3 of the report.

Is there extra practice for DAIS activities?

Absolutely! Within each CPA PEP module, candidates will find Additional Data Analytics Activities when they go to their Content section (hint: sometimes you will need to scroll waaaaay down).

Is PowerBI examinable?

Currently, PowerBI has not been a required piece of software for [virtual examinations](#). Though PowerBI may not be examinable, DAIS competencies are examinable because they are in the [Competency Map](#), which is the authoritative guidance for module creation, module evaluations, and the common final evaluation.

What do employers want?

Okay, this last question is not an FAQ, but I think it should be which is why I included it. If I'm not able to take some liberties here, where can I?

A few weeks back I spoke with the CEO of a large private Canadian company and naturally, I asked questions centered around employability of early career business professionals. The CEO said—without hesitation—they wish their team employed individuals who:

1. Are better able to see a problem, walk through a process, understand the complexities to solve the problem, and implement the solution [Sam Comment: This sounds like [The CPA Way](#)], and
2. The inclination to create “fun little dashboard things” so they can review the work and only dig into the back-up numbers when necessary.

If a picture is worth 1,000 words, how would you value a DAIS dashboard?

Answer: The future of our profession.

Wendy Wilson, FCPA, FCGA

Wendy Wilson, FCPA, FCGA was presented the KBH Facilitator Award, which recognizes facilitators or session leaders who have had a notable and positive impact on their candidates and approach their role with a dedication to excellence. She has been a CPA facilitator since 2016 with CPAWSB.

What Wendy likes about the CPA program

“The CPA program is flexible for candidates to work on their modules and study based on their weekly schedules.

The use of technology — now incorporating Power BI into some aspects of the weekly assignments — enables candidates to study and learn with the current technology used in the workplace. Relevant content ensures that the soon to graduate CPA has the technical skills to be successful in business.”



EFFECTIVE ELECTIVE PLANNING: PART 1

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In Part 1 of Effective Elective Planning, I will discuss the registration elements, including the “order of operations” of pre-and-co-requisites for CPA PEP’s education program. In [Part 2](#), I will continue the Effective Elective Planning mini-series to discuss things to consider when selecting which electives to register in. I will end the series in [Part 3](#) by discussing FAQs specific to elective modules and licensure.

In Core 1, candidates spend much of the Orientation Workshop planning a schedule to complete their CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) studies. During that time, candidates use various resources to help them determine their path from Core 1 to the CFE.

The CPA PEP education path is as follows:



I frequently hear from candidates who are preparing to register in CPA PEP elective modules. I have collected the most frequently asked questions below:

1. Should I fast-track?

If you have already started Core 1, you won’t be able to add Core 2. However, after you complete the standard offerings of Core 1 and Core 2, you can choose to fast-track your elective modules. Not sure what fast-tracking is, or if it’s for you? Check out my blog post on [module fast-tracking](#).

2. How many elective modules do I need to take? When can I take them?

You need to pass Core 1 and Core 2 before starting your first elective module and you need to pass at least two electives before starting Capstone 1.



3. When do I register for my elective modules?

If you plan to take modules “back-to-back”, you will need to register for the next module before finding out if you have passed your current module. If you are unsuccessful in your current module’s exam, and that module is a pre-requisite for the next one (for example, Core 2, which you need to pass before starting an elective), you will be withdrawn from that module. CPAWSB (cpamodule@cpawbsb.ca) will email you to discuss your registration options.

Consider using [CPAWSB PEP’s schedules](#) to plan out your path. This way, you won’t accidentally book something that conflicts with a module weekend or examination date. You can make a note of key registration dates.

4. What happens if I fail a core module?

You need to be successful in both core modules before starting the elective modules. If you fail Core 2 and are registered for an elective module, you will be withdrawn from the elective module and contacted by CPAWSB (cpamodule@cpawbsb.ca) to discuss your registration options.

5. What happens if I fail an elective module?

You can either retake it or switch to another elective. You can handle your registration matters on your candidate portal or by contacting cpamodule@cpawbsb.ca.

6. What happens if I fail an elective three times?

Each module can only be attempted three times. Typically, if you were unsuccessful in any of the education steps of CPA PEP three times, you would be expelled from CPA PEP and need to re-apply. If accepted, you would start at Core 1.

That is not necessarily the case with the electives. If you are unsuccessful in one elective three times, you can register for another elective. You have four elective modules to choose from, so you have some choices until you are unsuccessful in three electives three times each. If you find yourself struggling with any module multiple times, please consider reaching out to our Learner Support team (learnersupport@cpawbsb.ca) to craft a study plan tailored to your needs.

EFFECTIVE ELECTIVE PLANNING: PART 2


Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

1. Which electives should I take?

First, check with your employer

Suppose you are in a CPA Registered Training Office, there may be strict requirements on which elective modules you must take to fit with their accreditation - And this is not just for a public accounting firm. It may be for any industry and government roles as well.

Next, access Elective Syllabi

In your Introduction to CPA PEP module, a course you are automatically granted access to when you are registered in Core 1 and can be found in your D2L “waffle”: 

Consider your career ambitions and goal

There, you can skim through Elective Syllabus to review the various activities and course content and see which electives fit with your career aspirations. You could also check the CPA Competency Map for content examinable in each elective module.

Remember your Day 2 CFE role

When you write the CFE, you will declare one “Role” for your Day 2 exam. While you can declare a role outside of the elective modules you completed, a strategic choice would be selecting one of your completed elective modules. This will help with your confidence, as you will have already demonstrated elective-level depth in the elective module exam, and confidence is essential when preparing for the three-day CFE.

2. Can I take more than two elective modules?

Yes! You can take two, three, or all four electives - the only “catch” is you need to take them before starting Capstone 1. Once you start Capstone 1, you cannot go “back” during your time in CPA PEP.

This is not typical, though I have seen one candidate who took all four electives a few years ago. Let’s just say his Capstone 1 group was super happy. I bet he felt confident walking into Capstone 2 and the CFE, knowing he passed elective-level depth on all four electives. Outside of his Day 2 role, he only had to demonstrate competency at the CFE at the Core-level.

3. Do I think it is “worth it” to take more than two electives?

Probably not. I subscribe to the “more is not more” model and can find other things you can do to fill your time. But if you feel strongly about taking an extra elective or two, go for it.

Kenneth Singh, CPA, CA, MBA

Kenneth Singh, CPA, CA, MBA was presented with the KBH Facilitator Award, which recognizes facilitators or session leaders who have had a notable and positive impact on their candidates and approach their role with a dedication to excellence.

Ken started working with the School in 2016 as a Session Leader.

“I wanted to use this position as a platform to facilitate a learning environment for students where they could learn and have fun concurrently. I also wanted to coach and mentor students as a means of giving back to the program.” What surprises him most about the CPA program is how comprehensive it truly is. “It equips you with not only the technical skills to be an effective CPA, but also the necessary enabling, soft skills to be successful.”



EFFECTIVE ELECTIVE PLANNING: PART 3

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

1. What is “licensure”?

Licensure is a sub-set of the CPA designation, allowing someone to sign off on various assurance and/or taxation engagements.

Candidates can complete their education licensure requirements while completing their CPA PEP studies. To do so, they must pass both the assurance and taxation modules, write their CFE Day 2 in the Assurance role, and achieve depth in Financial Reporting at the CFE. Note, there are also work requirements a candidate must attain. Questions regarding the work experience required for licensure must be directed to your provincial CPA body.

2. If I completed CPA PEP without licensure, is it possible to get it after?

Yes! It is possible to become licensed once you become a CPA. This is referred to as “Post-Designation Public Accounting” or PDPA. Depending on what type of licensure activities you want to pursue and which province you would like to work in, the steps to get there will vary. For more information, visit [PDPA licensure requirements](#).

Bonus content: a word of advice

It is normal to want to do things “just in case” - we are accountants and therefore want to reduce what we perceive as risk. Here is a scenario I come across a few times per year with candidates:

Question: What if I want to become a partner of a firm and become a CPA without licensure - Should I complete the licensure requirements “just in case” I want to be a partner of a firm later?

Short answer: No. Don’t do it. Many of us think we want to become partners one day and decide not to pursue that path, and I can speak to this from personal experience.

Attack your elective modules

Now go on, attack your elective modules with confidence knowing that you are where you need to be now. You have done so by utilizing effective elective decision-making. See you in the next post!

TIPS FOR A BETTER RESPONSE: CASE WRITING

Author: Nikki Reardon Marchiel, CPA, CA

Guest writer Nikki Reardon Marchiel, CPA, CA is a long time CPAWSB session leader, facilitator and mentor to other facilitators.

Have you ever looked at a website, a memo, or an article that was lines of unbroken text and thought ‘ugh,’ then stopped reading? No one wants to read large chunks of text; we prefer short, bite-sized pieces of info that get to the heart of the matter. The users in your submissions feel the same! Below are some ideas on how to improve your case submissions (and as a bonus, most apply to your regular work, too!).

These are the key tenants for successful qualitative discussions:

Balanced discussion

- You need to have a balanced discussion to get to C (competent). This means points for both pros and cons, or risks and opportunities. If you only discuss one side (i.e. Only the risks with a certain decision), then you are what we call a ‘biased jumper.’ Virtually all cases will have both pros and cons for qualitative discussions, so don’t ignore the case facts! It is hard to be objective and see all angles of an issue; showing objectivity is a key skill for CPAs to develop.
- If you use bullets (see below), then it becomes easy to see that you have roughly an even number of pros and

cons. Don’t stress if they are not perfectly even; we are looking for a rough balance here.

- I feel like I am a salesperson for sub-headings. I don’t get a commission for recommending them, but they are a small, yet powerful tool to help organize your response. First, it looks professional. Second, it demonstrates to your user that you know what a pro versus a con is.

QQC

Almost every time you prepare a quantitative assessment, the next thing to do is discuss the qualitative. QQC stands for Quantitative, Qualitative, Conclusion. CPAs cannot live and die by the numbers alone! This comes back to having a balanced discussion and being objective, as discussed above.



Bullets

- If you are not using bullets, I encourage you to try them. It is easier for your user (and exam marker and a happy marker is a generous marker). When you have your CPA designation you won't need to worry about exam marking, but you will need to write for real-life users. Each bullet should cover one idea, and used effectively, bullets should help keep your writing concise.
- Bullets are also awesome for WIR (weakness, implication, recommendation) analysis. If you have a separate bullet for each of the W, I, R points, then you will remember to address each of the components.

Explain the WHY

Without a doubt, this is the hardest part of the qualitative for candidates. You can see the case fact, tell your user it is a con (for example), but not WHY it is a con. In case writing, we often say 'so what?'. If the case fact is that there is a penalty for late deliveries of goods, you will not get to "competent" for restating this. So what if there is a penalty? To you, it is

obvious why this is a problem, but not to your user. You need to state, for example, that the penalty is a con because it can impact the profitability of the proposal.

Incorporating enough case facts

Remember that virtually everything in a case can be used in your response. Don't ignore case facts! Ask 'how can I use this info in my response?' and then slot it into one of the requires in your outline so you can incorporate it into your memo. Everything is there for a reason!

Tailoring your response for your user

- Your user can google the tax implications, Handbook section, etc. for their problem. The value that CPAs bring to the table is interpreting the technical information and applying to their user's specific situation. If I go to my lawyer for a real estate transaction, I don't want them to tell me every technical detail related to buying a house. I want them to tell me the technical as it applies to my unique situation.

- While you likely have a lot of knowledge about a particular topic, remember that your user may not be as excited about section 85 rollovers as you are! They don't want a technical dump in detailed 'accountancy lingo,' so make it easy for them to understand, and incorporate as many case facts as you can! That way, your user knows the memo was written for them and not another user.

Recommendations

Your recommendation should be crystal clear, not wishy-washy. A good recommendation is, "I recommend you proceed with the investment because the quantitative results are positive, and the pros outweigh the cons. Specifically....."(and then you can justify a few pros that support the qualitative). A wishy-washy recommendation is, "You could go ahead with the investment, but you need to think about X first." Make a clear recommendation!

Consistency: your recommendation needs to be consistent with the quant. If you calculate a negative NPV, for example, then your recommendation should acknowledge this. It looks weird if you have a poor quantitative result yet recommend proceeding. The only time we should do this is if the qualitative factors outweigh the poor quant results.

Highlight recommendations! It is easy to miss one if it is not highlighted. I like to use a Recommendation heading and discuss each recommendation underneath, using sub-headings if needed. You can copy and paste the sub-heading for all your requireds to save a bit of time.

Kirsten Benzie, BMus, CPA, CA

Kirsten Benzie, BMus, CPA, CA, was presented CPAWSB CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) Facilitator Award.

Kristen's Advice to learners:

"I wish that candidates would start writing their practice cases under exam conditions in week one. I facilitate mainly Core 1, and I see so many candidates who are nervous about writing under exam conditions because they're afraid of failing. It's so important to start this practice early because it teaches key skills that are vital for exam day, like:

1. *how to manage your time,*
2. *how to write concisely, and how to make a decision and state your assumptions when you feel like you don't have all the case facts."*

What surprised Kristen about the CPA program?

"After many years of facilitating, I still learn something new every session.

Whether it's a new approach to a case that I hadn't considered before or a question that I've never come across before, there is always something new every session."

THE F-WORD: EXPLORING HOW TO USE IT

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

Feedback. Let's get real, receiving it can be a real ego boost, or hit, and is often a bit of both. While feedback can be difficult to receive, facilitators are your coaches, and we all have the same goal: for you to pass your exam and ultimately become a CPA.

Given that it is inherently challenging to receive feedback, the following is designed to help you answer, "how can you use feedback from your facilitator to increase your effectiveness as a learner?".

Time It

While it may be tempting to review feedback as soon as it's available, you'll have more success by setting aside time to review it, when you know you'll have the headspace to transform the feedback into action items. Since you know when to expect feedback (within 96 hours of the candidate deadline; 48 hours in week 8), consider creating a reoccurring calendar appointment to review it. You can import the Syllabus calendar from D2L into your personal calendar to make this even easier!

Set yourself up for success, and then...

Own It

As an experienced facilitator and instructor trainer, I can attest that educators are human, and may miss quality points our candidates provide. If you think your facilitator missed something in your response or if you are unclear about their comment, email them within D2L and they will respond within



24 hours. Many facilitators appreciate the opportunity to discuss these concepts with candidates.

Learners often discover they intended to provide a stronger argument than they wrote. In those instances, like an exam evaluator, a facilitator cannot provide full marks for something attempted but not clearly stated. Regardless of the outcome, emailing questions often leads to beneficial dialogue.

Consider leveraging [these case writing tips](#), to enhance your response to ensure you receive all the credit you deserve, and your intentions match your response.

Observe It

Each feedback guide represents data to collect and analyze. What aspects of your response did your facilitator deem to be Competent? Which parts were Reaching or Nominal Competence? Are there patterns within your technical discussions or calculations which caused confusion? Become a researcher of your feedback, collecting and categorizing data points such that you can strategically focus your efforts on areas which contain the largest amounts of future growth.

Share It

You are part of a community of learners, and have access to others through colleagues, classmates (current and former), and tutor networks. For example, consider [swapping cases](#) to understand different approaches to responses. Surround yourself with individuals with similar interests and it will pay dividends. At the very least, it's reassuring to know that you are not alone.

The [CPAWSB blog](#) is a valuable place to find ideas and [resources](#) to assist you in your learning journey, including advice on how to find a tutor.

Use it

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

*A quote often attributed to
— Albert Einstein*

Candidates are likely to repeat mistakes if they ignore their facilitator's feedback. Correcting bad habits before they form is a key reason to read feedback from your facilitator. While it can be difficult to review constructive comments, this is part of the learning process.

Do it

Perhaps it's next week, your next exam, or the next module. Regardless, you will have an opportunity to employ the feedback you have received and do better next time. In case writing, no objective "right" answer exists. Instead, think of an accumulation of small wins, where you improve with each opportunity.

Put yourself in the right place and mindset to receive your feedback, curate it, leverage your network, and relentlessly pursue small, incremental improvements towards exam achievement and career advancement.

You've got this!

CLOSING THE LOOP: ACTIVE REFLECTION

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

According to learning and management sciences, a feedback loop exists to assist in learning from mistakes. Scholars agree that this loop has, at a minimum, an inciting event, reaction, and reflection. Someone who fails to sufficiently synthesize and employ the feedback may find themselves repeating their mistakes and receiving the same feedback, leading to frustration.

The Feedback Loop

Previous posts have discussed [case writing best practices](#) (inciting event) and [how to use the feedback received](#) (reaction). This post will focus on the last part of the feedback loop, reflection, and provide a suggestion on how to engage in active reflection, a tool you can apply to your CPA studies and your career.

Keys to Active Reflection: WHAT and WHY

Imagine you've received feedback from your facilitator that your assignment response needed to defer revenue rather than recognize it. However, you don't understand why, so you email your facilitator. As discussed in your [Candidate Guide](#), the following examples are types of questions facilitators receive.

A poor question: "I don't understand revenue recognition vs. deferred revenue, please explain."

This question is vague; it doesn't specify what the candidate doesn't understand and asks the facilitator to "teach" revenue recognition to them.

A good question: "I am not sure if I understand why you would defer revenue when full payment is received at the transaction date. Is it because the goods don't all transfer to the customer at that point?"

Active reflection relies on WHAT and WHY. This example is good because it states WHAT part of revenue recognition is confusing and WHY the person asking doesn't understand it. Using active reflection to ask a question in this way will help your facilitator help you, turning your question into a meaningful conversation. To further enhance the strength of this question, include the assignment type and week number to direct the facilitator to the issue.

Putting it into practice: Applying WHAT and WHY elsewhere

Using WHAT and WHY to achieve depth

In addition to using WHAT and WHY in active reflection, the same formula often forms the basis of how to write effective bullet points in a case. The WHAT represents the case fact (e.g. 10% of the Cactus Café clientele is vegan). The WHY is the “so what,” conveying the significance of the case fact and news to the user (e.g. introducing vegan cheese and vegan pepperoni may increase vegan clientele, therefore, increasing pizza and sandwich sales). That point in which you feel you are over-explaining is depth. It is the deliberate practice of transferring what is in your mind onto the screen.

Applying WHAT and WHY at work or life. At a conference this past summer, when deciding which post-conference evening activities should take place, a group of us traded suggestions:

- **Delegate 1:** attend the post-dinner mixer with included beverages that would end at 9:00 p.m., because it was included in our fees (i.e. low

cost) and was an easily accessible way for us to get to know our fellow conference attendees.

- **Delegate 2:** procure beverages at a local store and consume them in our hotel room because the cost would be relatively low and we could engage in conversation with just the three of us,
- **Delegate 3:** retreat to the lobby to drink beverages, which would then save time and effort on a trip to an external location, but would increase our non-reimbursable conference costs.

The WHAT was the action, while the WHY was the justification to support each WHAT. It is the WHY that supports the reasonableness to determine future action. Without the WHY, you’re left with a series of unsupported opinions, which may have lead to indecision, frustration, and thirstiness.

You can avoid repeating mistakes by incorporating the WHAT and WHY approach in your active reflection when you receive feedback and ask descriptive questions. You can also apply WHAT and WHY to case writing and life to build towards examination and career success.



NEW UTILIZATION: INCORPORATING PEP MODULE CHANGES TO YOUR STUDY PLAN

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

This post will discuss three tactics candidates can employ to add or edit their study plan to make effective use of these new or revised items.

Let's start off strong - I'm MOST excited about

Sample Strong Response

Yes, you heard right. In addition to the classic Feedback Guide (FG) and Solution set, candidates will be provided with sample strong responses for each practice case. The sample strong responses are provided to demonstrate what a competent candidate could achieve in the time frame provided. These resources should not replace a student debriefing with the solution. Recall, the solution is meant to be a study tool; rather than reading the CPA Handbook or Income Tax Act, the solution provides narrative to the technical concepts and is provided as a context-specific technical study resource. PEP is focused on applying what you know, not simply repeating a standard or framework.

After writing your response and marking yourself using the solution and feedback guide, consider enabling track changes in word (and using a different colour

font in Excel) and edit your response using case writing best practices. The sample strong response is one example of how of what those best practices may look like. Remember, the goal is not to edit your case response to look anyone else's, but to become a tweaked version of your work such that you are working towards incorporate small, incremental improvements to your case writing skills.

Daylight Savings Workshop

Your workshops just got one hour shorter, you're welcome. Just kidding, this wasn't the work of session leaders or a cheeky blog author.

CPA Canada reviewed session leader and candidate survey feedback and determined that the workshops could either be trimmed down in time or bulked up in content. Choosing to focus on quality over quantity, workshops which were previously from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm will now run from 9 am to 4 pm. There are no changes to the hour lunch or two 15-minute breaks.

Consider using the extra half-hour morning cushion to arrive at 8:30am. Not only will you be providing yourself with an extra buffer of time which will help guard against the stress of running

late and penalties incurred if you arrive late, but you can use that time to set your intentions for the day. Given that workshop attendance is mandatory and activities pre-determined, the value you derive from these two-day investments will come down to what you want to get out of them, the focused intensity to which you bring to your studies.

On Saturday am while both figuratively and literally plugging in, consider writing down 2 - 3 items you wish to grow and strengthen that day. I would suggest one technical skill and one enabling competency. CPAs are required to be both technically strong, but also to be able to communicate and share their knowledge. Perhaps you want to work on your communication and team-work skills, your goal may be to ask or answer a question during the debrief of an activity that day. Many candidates find it unnerving to speak in a group setting, but that with practice it becomes easier. Consider getting that practice now, before your Capstone 1 group presentation.

One of the foundational principles CPA PEP is built on is that face time is sacred. Your session leaders are seasoned professionals with [varying backgrounds](#). They have a common interest: they care and are invested in your success. Be sure you utilize their experience and feedback to help you achieve your education and career goals.

Building on enabling competencies including teamwork, problem-solving, and communication, it's not just what you say, but...



How you say it

Communication minimum proficiency indicators (MPIs) for both your Integrated Problems and Practices Cases will now be Yes (“Y”) or No (“N”) depending on whether you have communicated effectively or not. This replaces the competency-based assessment of Communication (i.e. NA/NC/RC/C). I’ll provide some insider information on how facilitators are encouraged to score the Communication MPIs:

The “Y” is pretty much the default, but “N” is to signify significant weaknesses that may have taken away from your technical discussion.

If you receive an “N” for your communication MPI, take this very seriously. Read your facilitators’ comments and follow the advice above to utilize the sample response and case writing best practices. If you are not sure if you have resolved the issue, email your facilitator and show them your revised response. While the examinations prior



to Day 1 of the CFE are focused on your technical content, a lack of ability to communicate ones' technical knowledge may result in failing the case portion of a module.

Stay Consistent

You have built up a number of great habits and skills this far; make sure you keep doing the things that are helping you achieve your goals. Then consider incorporating some of the above additional resources, then re-evaluate your study plan. CPA PEP is a graduate-level program which means the onus is on candidates to take ownership of their studies while pairing you with a coach for each module. If you are unsure of a change you want to make to your study plan, I encourage you to reach out to your facilitator, they'd love to hear from you.

Now go get 'em and continue to maximize your effectiveness in 2022.

Krystal Huebl, CPA

Krystal Huebl, CPA was presented with the Exemplary New Professional award.

After her own experience as a candidate and helping support her firm's candidates, the advice that Krystal offers anyone entering the CPA program is to absorb it all.

"See if you can apply the technical knowledge you gain to real-life situations. You will need it in your career to grow, and just learning what you need to pass won't help with that."

PRACTICE LIKE YOU PLAY: THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING IN EXAM-LIKE CONDITIONS

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

My former rugby coach and conditioning trainer used to tell us, “you practice like you will play”. Since hanging up my cleats, I have often wondered, did Paul know his lessons for pitch preparedness would parallel to the accounting profession?

To practice like one plays is a sports analogy used to communicate the importance of making gym sessions (the practice) at the same intensity as the game you are training for (the play). In the following discussion, I will emphasize the importance of writing cases in exam-like conditions (e.g. a quiet room, within the time limit and only using the same resources provided on exam day) by offering counter-arguments to common objections I’ve heard from candidates over the years.

Common Objection #1: I don’t know enough to even ATTEMPT the case

You know more than you know, I promise. I refer you to the [ENTRY](#) column of the [Competency Map](#). You wouldn’t be here if you didn’t, at some point, know that technical [information](#); our [admissions team is thorough](#). Remember, the real learning is done when you debrief. By

working smarter, not harder and writing in the case minutes available, you leave [sufficient time and mental energy for a quality debrief](#).

Objection #2: I tried but wasn’t done by the time limit

Alrighty, you tried. If you are in a Core module, that means you attempted to write a practice case in 60 minutes, including reading and planning, hit 60 minutes and decided to keep writing. My question to you would be, did that extra time increase your case writing effectiveness?

In the history of case writing, I can count on one hand the number of times a candidate advised me they had enough time to write their case. While most candidates feel short of time, an overwhelming [majority still pass](#).

If you practice writing in the available time, your facilitator will be able to

provide you accurate feedback to both capture exactly where you are and how you can get to the next level based on your ACTUAL, not imagined performance. Improvement in case writing is based on small incremental improvements stacked on each other, which include using your [facilitator's feedback](#).

Objection #3: My facilitator will judge me

We mark your case and do our best to coach you to the next level, wherever you are. In fact, I tend to be skeptical when a candidate's response is too strong, as it suggests they took extra time to write, making my feedback based on the ideal, not the actual result.

Further, if you are doing your best and someone judges you for coming up short, that is a direct reflection of their lack of character. CPAWSB prides itself on having a strong team of educators and if you have an experience that would indicate otherwise, please follow the guidance in the candidate guide: first ask for clarification from your facilitator, and if that does not resolve it, please email cpamodule@cpawsb.ca. You are supported.

Objection #4: I'm afraid I won't qualify to write the final exam

I'm an accountant and like to crunch numbers. Per the candidate guide, a candidate must achieve 75 percent by the end of Week 8 and attend or receive accommodation for the workshop(s). Specific to Core and Elective modules, if a candidate just attempted each AO, didn't achieve a single RC and scored 50 percent on their MCQs, they would qualify.

Here's the proof:

- IP: 22.5% (100% of 15% for submitting + 50% of 15% performance)
- PC: 22.5% (as above)
- MCQs: 22.5% (as above, not including "bump" from pre-work and surveys)
- Workshop Participation: 10% (participation or accommodation)

As long as you show up and try week after week, you will qualify to write the final exam. If you encounter an extenuating circumstance, you may qualify for an extension and can request one by either emailing cpaextensions@cpawsb.ca or completing the [extension request form](#). Now, please go on and...

Execute Like You Have Practiced

Put in the work now because the exam is going to be difficult. Each week you practice you will build the confidence muscle to help you walk into the exam room with the silent knowledge that you have quality preparation on your side. While rugby coach Paul may have been referring to the commitment required for an evening of field drills or a morning track session, his words are equally relevant when tackling your weekly practice cases.

At CPA PEP, we must practice like we play.



PRACTICAL TACTICS AND TIME-SAVING TOOLS: PART 1

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

This two-part mini-series will introduce practical, and time-saving study tips split into two parts. The posts will focus on the tactics, that is using a larger goal to work backwards from, followed by tools, the daily tasks we complete to work towards that larger goal.

Why am I studying on a Wednesday night after a gruelling day at work?

First, [define your long-term goals](#), then you can start broadly with your “why” to develop your strategy. [Time management](#) tools are essential to keeping yourself on track. Make sure you plan your studies so that you don’t find yourself in a jam, struggling to keep up with your personal and professional commitments.

Treat assignments as exam preparation.

CPA PEP module content covers the same competencies as the module and Common Final Exam. Often candidates see completing module tasks and studying for the exam as separate activities rather than complementary ones. Start with the end in mind by

seeing each module assignment as exam preparation.

Follow this process as a framework to create your study plan for every module exam and the common final exam. Be sure to create your study plan early so you can take full advantage of it.

Write each practice case as if it were the exam.

Full stop. Establish these habits early on, and it will get easier even though screams of inner self-doubt will protest otherwise. I promise it will get easier IF you [write all of your practice cases in exam-like conditions](#).



Debrief after each practice case.

Not debriefing is like permitting yourself to repeat the same mistakes without ever learning from them. It is effectively throwing minutes, hours, and days of studying away. Yes, it sucks to revisit a PC you just tried your best at, only to be faced with your shortcomings. Would you rather suspect you did not attain Competent by not debriefing a practice case, or would you rather have it confirmed by failing your module exam or CFE?

In my opinion, there is no option. Face your fears, head-on. Use the time you have saved by writing your practice case in the actual time provided to debrief properly. Refer to the learning eBook for tools on how to effectively debrief, and [ensure you utilize feedback](#) to fast-track your personal growth.

Remember, it's not what you know when you submit your PC, but rather what you know when you debrief.

Get some help.

Your online facilitator is your first resource who will coach and guide you through each CPA PEP module, from Core 1 through Capstone 1.

Capstone 2 candidates will receive marked PC feedback from CPA Canada's National Marking Centre, where candidates may reach out to marking centre team leads directly via the candidate hotline. All CPA PEP modules have a regional discussion board for candidates to work with Lead Facilitators and each other toward material mastery.

If you'd like to explore additional resources, you can [consider hiring a tutor](#) or contacting CPAWSB's Learner Support team: learnersupport@cpawsb.ca.

PRACTICAL TACTICS AND TIME-SAVING TOOLS: PART 2

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

This two-part mini-series will introduce practical, and time-saving study tips split into two parts. This second post will add more tactics and tools to help you execute that strategy to achieve your larger goals.

Prepare

Where would you rather work:

Here?



Or here?



Spend a few minutes tidying up, then set the stage for success: water, caffeine of choice, headphones and music, if necessary. What should you do with your phone? That is up to you. If you feel a constant urge to check the latest TikTok or scroll through ‘Gram, keep your phone away during the work, then use it as a reward for finishing a study task.

Debrief after each practice case

Consider using the [Pomodoro technique](#). It is a way to break up work and rest, in smaller bite-sized chunks utilizing a timer to separate “work” time from “break” time. Want a visual timer? You can use this pre-set three-hour [Pomodoro](#) study session.

Complete four three-hour sessions

Nothing bums me out more than when a candidate tells me they are going to spend ALL weekend studying. That sounds awful. Do not wait to reward yourself for when you pass the exam.



Complete four 3-hour sessions this week? Take Sunday off. More is not more; the rest is just as important as the work. You want to be empowered to go into that room, fresh and ready to attack that exam.

Create accountability

You are more likely to hold yourself accountable if you share your goals. Let people know your intentions for the day. Knowing that they are likely to ask you how it went will help spur you through the friction that may arise.

Make an appointment with yourself. As I write this, there is an 11 am hot vinyasa flow class I am signed up for. I created a tactical barrier reminding me I do not have infinite time to write; I must work with focused intensity so that I can get achieve both my work and my fitness goals, reinforced with a sizeable cancellation penalty.

Document

Burned in my memory is the phrase, "If it's not documented, it's not done." Create a calendar for yourself and check off the days that you accomplish your study session goals or use a free habit tracking app. Collect evidence to prove to yourself you deserve positive exam results.

Just do it

I once read about a struggling aspiring runner. She started slowly and was embarrassed at her slow pace. Her friend reminded her that even the slowest lap was still running circles around the couch.

Your something is running circles around doing nothing.


I suggest you utilize the tactics outlined in [Parts 1 and 2 of this mini-series](#), mobilize them using the above tools, then Netflix and crash. You've earned it.

REDISCOVER YOUR PEP: THREE UNDER-RATED CANDIDATE RESOURCES

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

In my opinion, there are a few overlooked and underused resources for CPA PEP candidates. If used effectively, they can help you go from surviving to thriving. I've chosen these resources because, as I often reminded my team when I worked in industry, there are rarely accounting emergencies. Instead, we get caught in a spiral, usually because of poor preparation, lack of practice, or failure to reflect. The resources below pack in value and contain tools to help avoid that spiral through planning, practice and debrief.

1. Planning: Future module Syllabi

The moment you register in your first module, you're automatically registered in the Introduction to PEP Module. Go to your waffle; it's the three-by-three icon in D2L, type keyword "Intro," and "search" by selecting the magnifying glass to see the course. 

There you will see all of the Syllabi for the CPA PEP modules, which may be helpful to:

Plan your year: leverage the Syllabi and [CPAWSB PEP schedules](#) to ensure you have sufficient time to balance school, work, and life activities. If you know you have a challenging time at work or a

well-deserved vacation, be strategic in your CPA PEP module registrations.

Select your electives: you must pass at least two electives (though you can take three or even four!) before starting Capstone 1. Understanding the course requirements of each module may help you decide which electives are for you.

Manage your stress: knowing the challenges that await may help put candidates at ease. Having access to the eBook in Knotia provides candidates with the opportunity to re-familiarize themselves with course content and perhaps get a start on required readings before the beginning of the module.

2. Practice: Exam sets



You can find Practice Exam Sets available under the Content section of Core and Elective module homepages. These are actual cases and MCQs that were used on previous examinations, which means they follow the module examination blueprint for your module and are a parallel representation of what you can expect to see on exam day. These have been provided for practice purposes, and previously I've outlined how to maximize their effectiveness by [writing them in exam-like conditions](#).

results transcript

Pages four through seven of the [CPA PEP Module Examination FAQ](#) advise how to understand the feedback provided there. I cannot do it justice by summarizing and can only encourage you to review it for yourself. Here's a sneak peek at the annotated infographic on page seven of a sample transcript:

You make many sacrifices to dedicate yourself to your studies. I encourage you to use available resources to help you achieve your goals.

3. Debrief: Examination

Sample Transcript

EXAM: Core 1 Examination

CANDIDATE NUMBER: EXAMPLE PAPER

1. OVERALL RESULT: MARGINAL PASS

2. DECILE RANKING: N/A

3. PERFORMANCE ON THE OBJECTIVE FORMAT QUESTIONS

[Time allowed: 180 minutes]

Financial Reporting - Blueprint weighting 50-70%

Your Performance	Not Competent	Reaching Competent	Competent X	Competent with distinction
Group performance	8.3%	29.4%	57.4%	4.9%

Audit and Assurance - Blueprint weighting 10-30%

1 This is the actual result candidates obtained on the examination based on the Board of Examiner's passing profile. The standard is set by the Board based on pre-established expectations of what a candidate should be able to do for the questions/case presented.

2 Only candidates who fail the examination receive a decile ranking. The higher the ranking, the further the performance was from the cut score.

3 Performance feedback is provided on both portions of the examination:

- Objective Format Questions, and
- Case

The feedback is based on a single cohort and does not correlate with the overall result, which is based on a set passing profile.

WHO'S YOUR USER?

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

My colleague, let's call him Steve, gave a presentation pre-COVID to a room full of two hundred business professors. Luckily for us, it was recorded. When I pressed play, I saw Steve, in a suit and in front of a large, wooden podium. Steve's talk was great. He spoke fluently, paused appropriately. Then, about halfway through his twelve-minute presentation, Steve started discussing the history of accounting. His face lit up, hands flying around enthusiastically, and then the audience erupted into laughter. Steve paused, looked perplexed, then smiled and resumed his speech.

Accounting...Humour?

Steve received a nice round of applause with two people post-talk who "rushed" the podium. I emailed Steve to congratulate him on the polished talk, then asked him about his "joke" - did he mean to make a joke about how cool the history of accounting was? "No," he shared. "It is always important to know your audience."

Know Your Audience

How often have we "missed the mark" when having a conversation? Steve's story reminds us to remember our audience and direct the communication accordingly. Essential advice for giving presentations, imperative when case

writing, and applicable to the workplace.

I recently received an email from a candidate who questioned the relatability of CPA PEP's practice cases to the real-life workplace:

...I really hate the 1-hour thing. At no point in our career would we have only 1 hour to complete a project that we had minimal prior knowledge about and no ability to ask for help... it just wouldn't happen.

I get it, sometimes it is difficult to see how practice cases apply to the real world. This is why my reply focused on empathy and [included some tough love](#).



Embrace the Gap

[This process is frustrating](#), and while often the frustration results in growth, frustration never really feels good. I completely understand and agree with you; in the real world we would have (at least) a week and a team to address complex business cases such as these.

It's Always the Audience

The thing about CPA PEP is that it requires both education and real-life work experience. I suggest candidates look at it not as a trade-off, but rather, a complementary process, which is why your CPA designation requires both successfully [passing the module exams and the CFE](#), AND completing relevant work experience.

In the modules, the expectation is not at the level of what you would submit to a boss or a client. Candidates who adjust how they define “done” for a module case or exam often tend to buy in and improve their performance in the module.

Change your Frame (of Mind)

Consider thinking of case responses as a “snapshot” of what a candidate could do, almost like an elevator pitch. A well-crafted response is a valuable skill; as if someone is given a week and

a team to execute the ideas captured in the practice case “snapshot”, the additional resources would magnify, for better or worse, what was written in the “snapshot” practice case. Through time-restricted brevity, one may display their critical thinking skills are sufficient; that they can sort through various details and create that path to addressing users’ needs.

Assistance is Available

Your facilitators would love to hear from you to discuss [how you can “action” on their feedback](#). If you are looking for additional resources outside of your facilitators and what has already been provided by CPA PEP, please do not hesitate to reach out to CPAWBS’s Learner Support to offer custom solutions for learners looking to tailor their program to their needs. Learner Support can be reached at learnersupport@cpawsb.ca.

Parting advice: Don’t be too hard on yourself. We do not always get it right, but the important thing is we debrief, [learn from our missteps](#) and carry forward. Steve still speaks excitedly about accounting history, only now it is to a (virtual) room of The History of Accounting symposium attendees.

GAME DAY: WHY YOU TRAIN

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

The CFE is less than two weeks away. As you approach “game day”, let’s recap what we’ve covered about how to prepare and offer our suggestions for your final preparations.

We recorded the Asynch Module Workshop for Capstone 2, and alluded to it in our Capstone 1 post, [Swing and a hit: Knock-out your Capstone 1 Virtual Presentation](#).

In the virtual capstone 2 workshop we covered what to expect in capstone 2 and the CFE and provided both an overview and an immersive deep dive for each of the three days of the CFE. We reinforced [best case writing practices](#) and why it is [important to write in exam-like conditions](#).

We discussed common problem areas, providing practical and tactical tips to address each of:

- Critical reading and outlining
- Writing
- Time management
- Lack of technical knowledge

In the module workshop we discussed the importance of remembering our why. Why are we writing cases while others

are going out to the pub? Why are we immersing ourselves in IFRS versus ASPE differences? Why are we subjecting ourselves to limits beyond our comfort zones?

As you enter this final stretch, think about your why. We each have our own. Write yours down. Mentally carry it into the exam room. You’ll need this motivation as the days progress and you become tired. Let your why continue to fuel your desire to pass the CFE.

Our final advice to you is this: stick to the study plan you made at the beginning of Capstone 2. Use your preparation from these past six weeks and from the past years of undergraduate and graduate-level accounting studying as evidence that you are ready.

You may feel like you have not done enough. That you should do more. Now is not the time to make last-minute changes. In fact, making last-minute changes will only derail your confidence and the processes you have worked to build in Capstone 2. Rather, let the

lessons soak in as practice makes practice (not perfect). No one ever feels like they are ready. We certainly didn't and yet we successfully passed our exams, which is why we are now in the position to pass this advice along to all of you.

More is not more. Get some rest. Be confident in your growth. You have done enough. You've got this one.

We started the Capstone 2 module workshop videos with quotes and it seems only fitting that we should end CPA PEP with one as consistency is key. Attributable to a yoga studio wall, we provide this gentle yet powerful reminder:

"You are enough."

— Modo Bedford

Davidson, CPA, CGA

Davidson, CPA, CGA was presented with the CPAWSB Contractor Recognition Award. This award recognizes his notable and positive impact on his students and his dedication to excellence in his role as an in-person facilitator for the CPA preparatory courses.

"My advice to new students is to budget your study time and stick to it. When I started at Red River College in 1984, my two kids were four years old and four months old. I had a supporting wife, and we made a study plan for me each week, and it helped me get through. It even became more important when I worked full time at Canada Life and took my designation courses at night. I don't think I could have done it without a proper schedule for my study time."



SWING AND A HIT: KNOCK-OUT YOUR CAPSTONE 1 VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA and Nikki Reardon Marchiel, CPA, CA

During these challenging times we, the co-authors of this blog post, have taken many of the presentations we typically deliver live and in-person and transitioned them into the asynchronous virtual world.

Here are some practical tangible tips tailored for you to ensure the magic of your content will shine through to your virtual Capstone 1 presentation, mixed in with some tried-and-true presentation tips. Although groups are not being penalized for the quality of the video, you have the opportunity to redo or correct any mistakes. Take advantage of this and hit it out of the park!

Do these...

- Look at the video camera, your virtual audience, when speaking.
- Arrange a presentation flow with your group members:
 - Have the first presenter introduce the group and who will speak to which part of the presentation, then
 - Have each presenter “pass” the presentation to the next presenter, ensuring for a smoother transition.
- Grab the attention of your audience right away. Consider opening with a quote, statistic, or some other interesting fact related to your case to pique interest.
 - Consider showing this quote on your screen as a transition while you are talking. A few select animations can strategically enhance the delivery of your content.
- Speak loudly. Nothing is worse than not being able to hear someone presenting.
 - Checking the sound before recording your actual presentation can save you much time re-recording or editing your work.
- Be confident! You have worked hard on this report and you know your stuff. You know much more about this case than the panel does.
- Look like you enjoy presenting (or at least look like you don't hate it).
 - Smile. This will help relax you.

- Be honest with one another regarding your presentation styles. If you see your teammate doing something distracting while practicing, tell them. It is better to hear it now than from the panel.
- Thank the panel for their time at the end of the presentation.

...But not these...

- Make it obvious that you are reading from your screen or your notes while speaking.
 - If you are speaking in front of your laptop, put sticky notes around the camera to remind where you to look and help you connect with your audience when you are re-viewing your words.
 - If you insist on using cue cards, consider taping these behind your camera on the wall so they are accessible without losing that connection with your audience.
- Speak in a monotone. Ensure the volume of the voices is relatively consistent for all group members. The panel will be listening to many presentations and you want to make a good impression.
- Appear bored or uninterested. Listening to someone talk about something they are passionate about makes any presentation better. Nikki could listen to a presentation about hedging and enjoy it (!) but only if the presenter was passionate and confident.
- Using excessive hand gestures: these distract from your great presentation!
- Speak too fast. Slow down and over-annunciate if needed.

“There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave.”

— Dale Carnegie

Looks like Mr. Carnegie did not have the advantage of editing the perfect shot, eh? We invite you to consider the benefit of our current circumstance: during an in-person presentation, you only have one shot. Here, take as many as you need. Prepare, practice, be coherent, but also recognize that you have the power to say “cut!” and redo any whoopsies.

In recent months, many other professionals had to make a transition to an online platform. ***You are not alone.***

As CPAs we do not dwell on what could have been, rather we embrace the challenge, scan the environment, analyze our options, then conclude and advise consistent with that analysis.

Good luck completing your Capstone 1 presentation and your transition to Capstone 2.

PREPARING FOR THE CPA PEP EXAMS

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA and Nikki Reardon Marchiel, CPA, CA

We at CPAWSB understand stress can often accompany exams. Adding the layer of a remote exam may impact the stress of preparation.

Our goal is to be both empathetic and provide you with tools for self-empowerment. When faced with any circumstance you have two choices;

- Change your circumstances: Candidates can defer their examinations; we would suggest speaking with learnersupport@cpawsb.ca about your options before deferring your exam in the candidate portal.
- [Change your mindset](#): you have more power than you may think.
 - Examable material: the Competency Map, your syllabus for the module, the exam, and the Common Final Exam, has not changed. The work you have invested in during the module to develop technical competency will be tested on exam day.
 - Focus on the controllable: To that effect, focus on your inputs, your study plan, your environment, and set yourself to be in the best position to write your best exam, whatever that may look like.
 - [Accept the challenge](#): you are in training to become CPAs, the

individuals or teams people turn to for solutions to problems that haven't been solved before. Embrace the ability to demonstrate competency in any format. Building experience and confidence in a dynamic set of circumstances will add to your ability to perform as a resilient CPA.

1. Study Time: Preparing for the Module Exam

Gearing up to study for your module exam can seem daunting. [Here are some tips to get you started.](#)

2. Studying: The Search for Enough

A post about knowing [how much study and preparation is enough.](#)

3. Approaching Things Differently the Second Time Around

Though it may not feel like it at the time, one of the best ways to learn something is to fail at it. Read on for [ideas on how to make failing a module, course, or exam a learning opportunity.](#)

4. Practice Like You Play: The Importance of Writing in Exam-Like Conditions

The post explores the [importance of writing cases in exam-like conditions](#) by offering counter-arguments to common objections from candidates.

5. Tips for a Better Response: Case Writing

This post offers ideas on [how to improve your case submissions](#) (and as a bonus, most apply to your regular work, too!).



THE COMMON FINAL EXAM (CFE): ARE YOU READY?

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA

A few weeks before the final exam a Core 2 candidate posted the following message to the discussion board:

Title: Lots of content, we are getting close!

Everyone may feel like I do in that there are many, many documents to produce right now with the Module Workshop activities due next week. I find I need to carve out additional time to work on all of this, so trying to add more time such as waking up at 5am to work on it for an extra hour. Or listening to the module workshop videos in the car to get a jump on those activities.

All of the activities do really help with final exam preparations. I'm sure others are feeling there is a lot of content to churn out this week and next week, so I hope you all keep on charging to get it done and help get ready for the upcoming final!

— Anonymous

This message resonated with me as it spoke to candidate empowerment and control. This candidate embraced their situation and wanted to share their motivating words and tips to thrive in exam preparation.



Inaction has consequences

CPAWSB educators regularly received emails from learners seeking permission to skip a deliverable or ask us what the minimum required work is. The answer I provide is likely never satisfactory: There are no “have to’s” but rather consequences for not doing, including risking your exam eligibility status, performance on the exam, and if there is a habit of submitting half-attempted assignments, you may risk creating an identity of someone who does not give their full effort to the task at hand.

Hard work pays off

With that, I end this with a question I would ask of candidates in my Capstone 2 workshop in a non-COVID environment:

When you sit down to write the exam, in those quiet moments right before the invigilator yells “Go!”, how do you want to feel? Would you like to:

- Be ready and confident to write the CFE, knowing your Capstone 2 actions respected the sacrifices you made to get to the final CPA PEP module by integrating [feedback you received](#) and [utilized CPAWSB guidance](#),

Or,

- Be overwhelmed with self-doubt knowing your short-term (in) action did not align with your goal of becoming a CPA?

As anonymous encouraged us at the beginning of this post, the choice is yours.

John Wark, CPA - September 2017 CFE Governor General Gold Medal recipient

Like most candidates who write the CFE, John Wark spent a lot of time after the exam counting all the mistakes he thought he made, and wondering what more he could’ve done. After waiting two anxiety-filled months for the results to learn that he was not only on the national Honour Roll, but was also awarded the highest standing in Canada, he was overwhelmed by the congratulations he received.

To study for the CFE, John took a different approach than most do. Instead of trying to eliminate distractions, he flew back to Ottawa to spend more time with family and friends. He got into a groove of working through practice cases in the morning and spending the afternoons relaxing and recharging for the next day. He suggests that candidates find a balanced approach to studying where they dedicate time to preparing but also have something to look forward to and work towards. Between writing the exam and waiting for the results, John always had the CFE and the outcome in the back of his mind but found that getting back to work and being distracted again helped pass time.

The award has opened many doors for him, one of them being a job opportunity in Toronto that he has chosen to take. Thinking long term, John’s career goals are to experience a variety of work within the finance and business fields and his dream job would be as a CEO, preferably related to the sports industry.

CAPSTONE 2: FAQs AND RESOURCES EXPLAINED

Author: Samantha Taylor, PME, CPA, CA



With the Mock CFE submission deadline right around the corner, it is an understatement to say you are in the thick of it.

Over the past few weeks, some questions have arisen on the candidate discussion board regarding the resources available in Capstone 2.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to grab your favourite beverage, get comfy, and get ready to read some Capstone 2 FAQs.

Spotlight videos

Okay, this one is not strictly a question, but rather something that has come from a compilation of discussion board posts.

One resource I would like to highlight would be the Spotlight Videos, available

in Capstone 2 > Content > Module Resources > Spotlight videos. These short videos provide detail about D2L, feedback guides, the CFE Board Report, Capstone 2 Calendar, and CFE study calendar, Capstone 2 resources, the discussion board, and the National Marking centre.

Video feedback

Question: One of my friends said some cases come with video feedback from the markers. Which ones and how do I find my feedback?

Answer (from a candidate): Some National Marking Centre reviewers make a personalized video along with completing the feedback guide (for our marked Capstone 2 Cases). Go to your Dropbox, scroll down to the applicable case, select "Read" in the Evaluation Status column.

Answer (from me): Absolutely! Yes, the National Marking Centre will provide tailored video feedback on all Day 2 cases, and some Day 3 cases. Make sure you open all files in your dropbox as the video will first present as a link underneath your marked feedback guide.

Dropboxes

Multiple dropboxes:

Day 1 and Day 2

Question: Why are there so many (that is, more than one) dropbox for the Day 1 and Day 2 cases?

Answer: There is more than one Day 1 case being offered by Capstone 2. There is the “current” Day 1 case which is based on the most recent Capstone 1 case, and one for candidates who are either experienced Day 1 case writers, or who have previously taken the less recent version of Capstone 1.

For Day 2, there is one dropbox for each Day 2 role. Make one submission to your Day 2 role, the same one you declared to write the CFE in (the same one in your Candidate Portal) and your case will be marked, grades received.

The guidance is the same for both Day 1 and Day 2 cases with multiple dropboxes: only submit to one dropbox and you will be fine.

Question: What if I accidentally make a submission to the wrong one and catch it before the deadline?

Answer: That’s okay! Simply upload a blank file with and a note to the incorrect dropbox explaining to the marker to ignore this submission, then upload your correct case files to the correct dropbox.

Question: What if I realize I made an incorrect submission after the deadline?

Answer: Unfortunately, that would be considered a late submission and you would need to contact cpaextensions@cpawsb.ca to request an extension. Extensions are only granted for extenuating circumstances.

Day 2: Role changer

Question: I realized that I want to change my Day 2 role for the CFE. I contacted cpamodule@cpawsb.ca and was able to change my role. What happens in Capstone 2?

Answer: No need to worry! There are four dropboxes for each (full) Day 2 case. As long as you only make one submission, that submission in that dropbox will be marked. For example, if you write a Day 2 taxation case, and submit it to the Day 2 Taxation dropbox, your case will be marked according to the Day 2 feedback guide. It starts getting muddy when you submit multiple cases so please don’t do that!

National Marking Center and the Candidate Hotline

Question: Wait...I don’t have a facilitator in Capstone 2, yet I am still receiving feedback. How does this work?

Answer: Capstone 2 does not have facilitators. Rather, there is a national program that marks the Capstone 2 practice cases. Concern about how one of your responses was marked? First, read the News Post on your module homepage, then use the contact link there to contact a senior case representative. They will provide you timely insights into how your case was marked.

A MESSAGE TO THE CFE WRITERS

**Author: Samantha Taylor,
PME, CPA, CA**



With the CFE just around the corner, it is important to remember [why we train](#).

You have done enough; no candidate has ever mentioned they feel like they have completed their studies, much like we never quite feel ready to make an important presentation. You can execute your plan and ensure you can bring your best come exam day. Now is the time to look inward and practice self-care. That may look different to everyone, but could include:

- putting your phone on do not disturb and having a bath
- watching a movie, listening to an audiobook or podcast, and munching on snacks
- taking a furry friend, or yourself, for a walk
- cooking an elaborate meal (even if that looks like ordering through a delivery service)

Essentially, be kind to yourself and let your brain soak in your efforts of the past seven weeks and past few years.

If your study plan doesn't include studying, don't add it now. You have done enough. You are enough.

Good luck. You've got this!

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