



**Certified Management Accountants Accelerated Program for
Internationally Educated Accountants (CMAAP)**

Public Report

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Bow Valley College partnered with Certified Management Accountants of Alberta to offer a language enhanced, Accelerated Program (AP) which facilitated admission to write the CMA Entrance Exam. This program was jointly funded by Alberta Employment and Immigration and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The program provided opportunities for internationally educated accounting professionals to reenter into meaningful employment in their fields. This integrated program which positions language needs as a central component of its delivery mode fostered learner success by breaking down the language barriers which are currently preventing internationally educated accounting professionals from entering their profession. The CMAAP program has met learner needs by addressing skill deficits, accounting knowledge and gaps in language skills.

The CMAAP partnership (BVC and the CMA) has resulted in a successful model for the delivery of language support classes to immigrants desirous of obtaining a CMA designation. The following brief narrative uncovers some of the findings from the project, learnings discovered along the way, and recommendations gleaned from the experience.

Recruitment

Recruitment for this program was conducted in partnership with the CMA. The project coordinator was responsible for marketing the program, conducting information sessions, interviewing potential candidates, scheduling language assessments at ILVARC and registering the learners in the program at BVC. In terms of marketing, the CMA advertised the program on their website and this was a path that a significant number of the learners took to find out about the program. Assessment of credentials was undertaken by the CMA. Language assessment (ELTPA) was administered at ILVARC and suitability interviews were conducted at BVC.

We had a total of one hundred and twenty potential candidates who attended information sessions onsite at BVC. Of the potential clients, eighty-eight applied to our program and sixty were interviewed and assessed for AP prerequisites. Twenty-five learners total were accepted to both cohorts of the program.

Delivery

Delivery of this program was from Monday to Friday from 9:00 – 3:00. One day per week, the CMA delivered the AP program. On this day learners were in class from 9:00 - 4:00 to mirror the regular offering of the CMA AP program (which is usually scheduled on either Saturdays or Sundays).

The language support component of the program was designed with the CMA materials and outcomes at the forefront thereby not adding additional work to the heavy load the learners

were already carrying with the AP program. It also ensured that the materials were contextualized and learners were motivated to engage in them.

Retention

Retention rates were not an issue in this program. However, it must be stated that learners who were not successful on the CMA assessments (who then were ineligible to write the Entrance Exam) began to disengage a little towards the end of the course as their focus had shifted to finding work.

Evaluation

Gains in language proficiency have been documented using the ELTPA and recorded in CLB scores. Learners demonstrated improvement in all strands. While some of the learners entered the program with CLBs at the top of the range measurable on the ELTPA, others made gains in their CLB levels. In cohort one, 81% of the learners stayed the same or increased one CLB in speaking, and reading. There was a 91% gain (or remained the same) in listening. In writing the situation was a little bit different in that only 64% of the learners showed an increase or remained the same. In cohort two, 100% of the learners who took their final CLB assessment stayed the same or increased one CLB in speaking, listening and reading. In writing the situation was a little bit different in that only 83% of the learners showed an increase or remained the same. Perhaps the most evident gain for all learners was their level of confidence in expressing themselves orally in both formal and informal settings.

Learners were also assessed using the WLA upon entry in both cohorts by BVC trained assessors.

The TOWES test was administered in both cohorts. There was in most cases a direct correlation with their outcome on the TOWES test and their language scores. All of the learners were given a full TOWES report and reference to the TOWES online tools to further develop skill areas.

The most significant evaluation were the quizzes and exams associated with the CMA AP. These exams were very difficult and learners underwent a significant amount of stress around exam time.

Successes

There have been many successes in this program both realized during the program and after the delivery phase at Bow Valley College. During cohort 1, two of the learners were nominated and won significant awards. There have also been employment successes for many of the learners in both cohorts of the program. It is notable that even learners who were not eligible

to write the CMA Entrance Exam were able to obtain better jobs than they had previous to enrolling in the program. This can be in part attributed to the mentorship and information interview components of CMAAP.

Recommendations

- *Allow sufficient time for admission procedures.* Admission procedures when an external qualification body is involved need to be taken into consideration as in many cases more time is required than planned.
- *Build in study time and explicitly teach study strategies.* The need for more individual and group study time surfaced in both groups.
- *Allow for enough flexibility in program design to build in extra supports when needed.* A need which surfaced with the cohort one group was the need for additional accounting support. This was an unforeseen need in the planning stages of the program and proved difficult to meet.
- *Set language proficiency levels high enough.* The original minimum CLB levels set for this program were 7 in all strands. The learners who interviewed for the program had CLBs in the 8-10 range. When an external evaluation tool is key to a program and that tool is the same one used for university educated native English speakers, the minimum CLB should be set at 8 (which is the entrance requirement for most post secondary institutions). There should also be the realization that this is a minimum requirement and learners at this level will require support.
- *Keep lines of communication open and clear between partners.* It is important to have a lead at the partnering institution that can answer questions and make decisions.