

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

#### Professional Accountancy G. Dip.

**Date of Review: June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the graduate diploma in Professional Accountancy. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

*The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.*

#### **Executive Summary of the Review**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Professional Accountancy program submitted a self-study in June 2022 to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its diploma. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Business, and selected by the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a modified desk-audit review on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The visit included interviews with the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduates Studies, Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research and Director of the Program.

The Director of the Program and the Dean of the Faculty of Business submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (August 2022 and August 2023). Specific recommendations were discussed, and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

- **Strengths**

- A key GDPA strength is that is accredited by CPA Ontario, thus being an attractive alternative for the many students hoping to earn a CPA designation
- The establishment of a common case-based midterm and final exam
- Personalized feedback provided to students on the Midterm exam following Common Final Examination (CFE) guidelines
- McMaster's GDPA is attractive to accounting graduates working in the Hamilton area, especially with the resumption of in-person instruction.

- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**

- Use of tenure track faculty should be encouraged, not discouraged
- More administrative support is needed
- Historically, the CFE pass rate has not been as strong as might be expected for an accredited program, but the move to a "hard" B+ entrance requirement should help to improve results over time. Due to the size of the program, the results should be assessed over multiple years, as any one year of pass rate results may could vary significantly from a long-term trend.

### **Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses**

Please outline the recommendations made by reviewers and indicate how you plan to address the recommendations in the chart below.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Follow-Up</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up</b>	<b>Timeline for Addressing Recommendation</b>
1. <i>Per the self-study report (p. 10) "... since 2021, on the direction of then Dean Len Waverman, regular full-time tenure/tenure track faculty members were asked not to teach in the program in order to deploy academic capacity to teach other regular MBA or UG courses or use that time to further the research mission of the school and the university. Consequently, regular</i>	<p>The program recognizes the Review Committee's recommendation for tenure and tenure track faculty, and agrees that instructor continuity is of benefit to the students in the program.</p> <p>The program feels there are many benefits to students by continuing with regularly returning sessional instructors including a closeness to changing industry trends, innovation and developments in</p>	Dr. Emad Mohammad Mr. Aadil Juma	Summer 2023

<p><i>tenure and tenure track faculty are not teaching in the GDPA program.” Similarly, teaching in the Graduate Diploma program is not counted towards faculty members’ teaching load in the DeGroote School of Business. In 2022, we noted that no tenured or tenure-track faculty are teaching in the GDPA. The extensive use of sessionals reduces the continuity in the program and the potential benefits of students learning from instructors with research experience. We recommend that tenured and tenure-track faculty be encouraged to teach in the GDPA as part of their regular teaching load and/or on an overload basis. This would better allow the program to contribute to the attainment of University priorities relating to teaching and scholarship.</i></p>	<p>common practice, networking opportunities, and insights into hiring practices.</p> <p>It was noted in a meeting with CPA Ontario in 2023 that students who have taken the DeGroote GDPA program have an 11% higher pass rate of the “CFE” (CPA examination) than students taking the program through CPA Ontario, as well as a higher pass rate against other schools offering a similar program, indicating the strength of our instructors.</p> <p>The Area and Program Director oversee the attainment of University priorities related to teaching and scholarship within the program, and meetings are held bi-annually with instructors to align these priorities with in course materials.</p>		
<p><i>2. Our discussions indicate that since the inception of the GDPA approximately 8 years ago, the stipend for teaching in the program has not increased. For example, sessionals (who make up the majority of those teaching in the program) have received \$10,500 per course since</i></p>	<p>A salary increase was approved by the Dean’s Office, DeGroote School of Business for the 2023 academic year. Instructor salaries were increased from \$10,500 per course in 2022 to \$11,200 per course in 2023. This increase is higher than sessional instructor salaries in other DeGroote programs, which</p>	<p>Dr. Emad Mohammad Mr. Aadil Juma</p>	<p>Summer 2023</p>

<p><i>inception. We recommend that the compensation for those teaching in the program be reviewed to ensure that is (and remains) competitive and sufficient to attract experienced faculty, including tenured and tenure-track faculty, to teach in the program.</i></p>	<p>is currently \$10,200 per course.</p> <p>The program also feels this compensation amount is competitive compared to other institutions offering a similar program. For example, the Director of the GDPA program at Toronto Metropolitan University shared that their instructors are paid \$6300 or \$8500 per course depending on their contract agreement.</p>		
<p><i>3. We note that the entrance average for admission to the GDPA was increased to a “hard” B+ (that is, no exceptions) several years ago based on a review of the program by CPA Ontario. We believe that such an increase is warranted to help ensure that the pass rate on the CPA examinations (the “CFE”) increases to a more acceptable range. We also note that one of the University’s key priorities is “to aspire to embed an inclusive approach that intentionally engages and represents a diversity of peoples, perspectives, and ways of knowing, in everything we do at McMaster University.” We recommend that after the pass rate on the CFE increases to a more sustainable rate (above 80%) the GDPA</i></p>	<p>As noted above, it is our understanding that graduates of DeGroote’s GDPA program are more successful in the “CFE” (CPA examination) than students taking similar courses at CPA Ontario or other institutions.</p> <p>Based on this understanding, the program required admissions criteria (B average in the final two years of study) will be removed for the 2025 admissions cycle.</p> <p>The B+ average entrance requirement highlighted by the Review Committee is a requirement mandated by the School of Graduate Studies; therefore, we are unable to remove this entrance average. However, this average is not a “hard” B+ and the program regularly considers applicants who do not meet this criterion for admission to the program. The</p>	<p>Dr. Emad Mohammad Mr. Aadil Juma</p>	<p>Summer 2023</p>

<p><i>assess whether the B+ entrance requirement is limiting the ability of a diverse cohort of students from entering the program. For example, is the level of diversity in the GDPA consistent with the level of diversity in McMaster's undergraduate Bachelor of Commerce program?</i></p>	<p>program administration manually assesses these applicants, and letters of support may be written to the School of Graduate Studies if an offer for admission is believed to be warranted by the program.</p>		
<p><i>4. Our discussions indicate that there is a lack of administrative support in the GDPA. Yvonne Kwok was the former Program Administrator however, due to term limits at McMaster University, she is no longer eligible to remain in that role. We recommend that a Program Administrator be appointed (such as Yvonne Kwok) reporting to the Program Director.</i></p>	<p>The program administration has returned to the DeGroote Student Experience office and an Admissions Officer and Academic Associate have been assigned. The Program Director feels the appointment of these two positions has been an asset to the program.</p>	<p>Dr. Emad Mohammad Mr. Aadil Juma</p>	<p>Summer 2023</p>
<p><i>5. The Executive Committee charged with overseeing the Graduate Diploma of Professional Accountancy program does not appear to meet regularly. The Committee should meet at least once per year to review curriculum matters, faculty recruitment and CPA</i></p>	<p>Conversations with the Program Director, Area Chair, and Manager of Student Experience occur as emerging items arise (such as the recent question of retaining 4AF3 as an admissions prerequisite).</p> <p>There is a continuous drive for improvement within the program, reflected in the regular meetings of the</p>	<p><b>Not Applicable</b></p>	<p><b>Not Applicable</b></p>

<p><i>Examination pass rates. This will be of increased importance as a new GDPA Director has recently been appointed.</i></p>	<p>program administration, specifically in the Winter term during the admissions process. While there is limited opportunity for academic discretion due to CPA Ontario regulations, pass rates and areas for improvement within the program are shared with instructors with a goal of finding development opportunities.</p> <p>Year-end debriefs with instructors and regular Area meetings address larger concerns, while additional meetings are scheduled directly with individual instructors as necessary throughout the program duration.</p>		
<p><i>6. As noted above, there are several universities in Ontario accredited by CPA Ontario to deliver the final CPA courses needed prior to Capstone 1 and 2 offered by CPA Ontario and the CPA Common Final Examination. A key advantage for these programs, particularly once in-person instruction resumes, is serving the local market where students either attend university and/or have moved to work. Thus, convenience of location is critical. Both faculty teaching in the program and students alike appear to favour locating the CGPA</i></p>	<p>The Program agrees with the Review Committee's recommendation for the below reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As the administrative staff and Student Experience office are located on main campus, it is of benefit to the students to be able to access these supports and services easily.</li> <li>2. Students have shared that many already have housing secured near main campus, making it easier for them to commute to their classrooms.</li> </ol>		

<i>classes on the McMaster main campus rather than at the QEW satellite campus. We recommend that GDPA classes be held on an ongoing basis at the main campus of McMaster University.</i>	As such, we support the recommendation for GDPA classes to be held at main campus in future years.		
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### Faculty Response

The Dean thanked the review team members and noted that the assessment is confirmation of the need for a Graduate Diploma in Professional Accountancy program, and a reflection of the commitment of the team.

The review team identified several areas of improvement, and the Program Director has addressed the recommendations in the Program response and implementation plan. Below, the Dean commented on each.

1. **Teaching Personnel:** we expect this issue to be addressed with the significant growth in faculty hiring at the School of Business over the next three years. I am in support of tenure/tenure track faculty teaching professors teaching in this program on an overload basis. Additionally, we feel that there are professionally qualified sessionals who are committed to teaching in this program on a regular basis.
2. **Teaching Stipend:** The stipend for our sessional instructors in the GDPA is higher than our general sessional instructor rates and it was increased again this year. We will continue to monitor this rate going forward.
3. **Student Diversity:** We agree that diversity is important in all our programs including GDPA and have asked the program directors to continue to monitor diversity in their programs and take actions to rectify lack of diversity as appropriate. However, we don't feel that diversity is directly related to admission GPA.
4. **Administrative Support:** All programs in the Faculty of Business are provided with the required administrative support through our student experience office and this program is no exception. At this time, the GDPA has access to an Admissions Officer and an Academic Associate from the student experience staff.
5. **Course Venue:** We agree with this recommendation and understand that the program has already implemented it.

**Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation:**

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the May 2024, meeting. The committee recommends that the **Professional Accountancy** program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than eight years after the start of the last review.