



# **QAA RECRUITING GUIDE**

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**2021**  
EDITION

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION**

- PREFACE
- ABOUT THIS GUIDE

## **SECTION II: ACCOUNTING PATHS**

- WHAT IS THE CPA DESIGNATION?
- REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CPA DESIGNATION
- TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

## **SECTION III: ACCELERATED RECRUITING**

- EY CHALLENGE
- IDEATION CHALLENGE
- SUMMER CONFERENCES

## **SECTION IV: RECRUITING PROCESS**

- TIPS FOR HOW TO STAND OUT IN THOSE EVENTS
- COFFEE CHATS + GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK
- SOME EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK FOR COFFEE CHATS
- HELPFUL CONTACTS
- BIG 4 RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TIMELINES
- TYPICAL QUESTIONS

## **SECTION VI: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**



## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

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### **Preface**

This guide was written to provide guidance to students who are looking to pursue an accounting career particularly at the Big 4 accounting firms.

This guide aims to make the recruiting process easier for all students and educate students about the accounting pathway. The ideas, advice, and tips in this guide are based on the personal experience of contributors. By no means does the guide have any intent in influencing students to solely recruit for the Big 4. Nothing in this guide is a concrete to-do and should serve only as a guideline or a reference to supplement what you may already know. While the material in this guide is correct and accurate to the best of our knowledge, we recognize that we may be misinformed about some things.

The contributors take no credit for either your success or your failure as a result of this. Throughout this guide, the contributors recommend the use of other resources and guides by name. The contributors and this guide have no personal or professional association to any of these resources. There is no incentive that may skew the perspective of the guide. Similarly, the contributors have no control over the content of these resources and guides and take no responsibility for its accuracy or relevance. Please use them at your own discretion.

### **About this Guide**

This guide was created to make recruiting for accounting jobs (especially audit/assurance) easier for Queen's students. We tried our best to make all the relevant topics and common student inquiries ("What is audit/assurance?", "How does the recruiting process work?", etc.) as clear as possible. This guide is catered for first and second year students, though we welcome all readers who are interested.

\*Recruiting timelines vary each year at the firm's discretion.\*





## **SECTION II: ACCOUNTING PATHS**

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### **What is the Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Designation?**

It is a title that is seen as professional and respectable that provides a lot of versatility in high-tiered finance roles. In a way, it can be seen as an MBA for accounting that is always in demand as people with the Canadian CPA Designation are highly qualified in the accounting, business, and finance field.

### **Requirements for the CPA Designation:**

Students can get started by joining the Post-Secondary Ambassador Program (PSAP) that is provided by CPA Ontario. Through this membership, students have access to exclusive opportunities to learn more about the CPA designation as well as network with professionals that have extensive experience in the industry.

### **Technical requirements:**

- Admission into CPA PEP (professional education program) through 120 credit hours
- GDA (graduate diploma in accounting) 15-month program vs up to 27 months through CPA PEP
- 9 core prerequisites
- Modules required to finish (6 common technical modules, 2 elective modules, capstone module, CFE (common final exam))
- At least 30 months of practical experience (can accumulate up to 18 months prior to CPA PEP)

These requirements are typically fulfilled post-graduation, but the credit hours require a CPA accredited firm to verify your activities.





## **SECTION II: ACCOUNTING PATHS**

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### **Audit/Assurance**

The role in audit and assurance is to examine and test the accounts on the financial reports of an organization to ensure accuracy for the year-end reports. This would involve reviewing journal entries, communicating with clients to obtain required financial information, and working in teams.

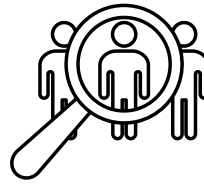
### **Taxation**

The tax practice would require thorough research and understanding of tax laws to help companies optimize on their tax obligations and meet their obligations. The role will also involve looking for opportunities to utilize tax advantages such as refunds and deductions as well as maneuvering around tax laws.

### **Advisory**

The advisory group offers financial and technical advice that focuses on increasing the efficiency of the organization. This would involve creating financial reporting programs or accounting programs with the latest technology. Also strategy and risks assessments are included in the overall planning.





## SECTION III: ACCELERATED RECRUITING

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As firms look for new recruits, they try to search for talent prior to major recruiting timelines. Typical on-campus recruiting starts early fall at the beginning of the school year. However, there are opportunities for firms to attract early talent through a variety of events. This can include informal recruiting in workshops/events, participation in competitions, or applying to annual summer conferences. This not only demonstrates initiative in getting involved, but will help in the interview process at each accounting firm as you get a better feel for what the environment is like. In this section of the guide, we will discuss a few opportunities you can get involved in to help with your accounting career path.

### EY Challenge

EY Challenge is similar to a case competition but it requires a presentation about your team in order to make it to the actual challenge. In order to compete in the competition, you must submit a video entry to explain why your team is the best suited for the competition. After being accepted into the university-based competition, your team will be given the case for a predetermined period of time before the presentation day. Feel free to click on this link to see a past example of the challenge: [HealthEY](#). The presentation date will provide a unique opportunity to network with EY employees and recruiters as it is exclusive to only 40 competitors. This makes it easier to develop a more personal connection while also engaging in fruitful conversation with like-minded individuals. If you win the university-based EY Challenge, you move onto the final round at the EY office. The deadline to apply to this challenge varies depending on the year, but is usually around late October to early November. In the past, the competition has been held mid to late November.

### KPMG Ideation Challenge (KIC)

KPMG Ideation Challenge is similar to entrepreneurship-based competitions. It requires you to think of an innovative product, which does not exist currently, and present them with your team. You will need to submit a cover letter and resume to register. Once your application is screened, you will be invited to participate in a second screening round where there is an evaluation of your ability to work in a team and also come up with ideas. The deadline to apply for this challenge is usually early January, and the regional competition which tests team capabilities usually takes place in late January. The national competition day is around early/mid February and the global competition day is around early/mid April.



## SUMMER CONFERENCES

Summer conferences are the gateway to getting an offer for the following summer recruiting. The students that make it through the interview stage will have a reserved opportunity to meet a plethora of representatives from the firm and perhaps even some future coworkers. It is a unique opportunity to learn more about each firm's culture firsthand from the employees.

### PwC Talent Academy

The deadline to apply is typically around early April (This year, the deadline to apply was on April 7, 2021). You have to submit your resume and transcript for this opportunity. If you pass the screening process, for the next round of selection, you will be invited to take a pre-recorded interview and play two logical games. For the final round, it will be a live interview but can be either virtually or in-person.

### Deloitte National Leadership Conference

The deadline to apply is typically around late April (This year, the deadline to apply was on April 25, 2021). You have to submit your resume, cover letter and transcript for this opportunity. If you pass the screening process, you will be invited to take a pre-recorded interview. For the final round, it will be a live interview but can be either virtually or in-person. The conference has a team-based case competition.

### Executive Look KPMG

The deadline to apply is typically around late March (This year, the deadline to apply was on March 28, 2021). It requires your resume, cover letter and transcript. If you pass the screening process, you will be invited to take a pre-recorded interview. For the final round, it will be a live interview but will take place either virtually or in-person.

### Experience EY

The deadline to apply is typically around late March (This year, the deadline to apply was on March 28, 2021). It requires your resume, cover letter and transcript. If you pass the screening process, you will be invited to take a pre-recorded interview. For the final round, it will be a live interview but will take place either virtually or in-person.







## SECTION IV: RECRUITING PROCESS

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On campus recruiting (OCR) starts in September, and it is an early opportunity for all those looking to secure a summer internship or full-time job for the following summer. Interviews will likely remain virtual for OCR in 2021 due to COVID-19. There will be numerous updates regarding fall recruiting from Big 4 firms on social media, LinkedIn, TikTok, so be sure to check them out! Also, there will be information sessions and industry nights with all Big 4 representatives in attendance, which is a great opportunity for you to ask questions, learn about the corporate culture, and network with Big 4 representatives. Mid-sized firms sometimes recruit in the time frame with the Big 4. There are a growing number of firms in various industries that also offer pre-approved CPA programs, such as RBC, Walmart, Telus, Rogers, and Bell. These firms also recruit in a similar time frame as the Big 4 - primarily in the fall, but also throughout the year. This section will mainly focus on the Big 4 Accounting Firms recruiting process and timeline, but students may need to research further for timelines of the non-traditional routes as well as changing dates for any firm.

### Tips for How to Stand Out in Those Events

1. Be sure to attend those events before the recruiting cycle to talk to firm representatives and get familiar with the firm culture (Big 4 really value who attends the sessions at the firm)
2. Ask questions to show that you are interested in the firm or accounting or pursuing a CPA in the future
3. Connect those firm representatives you met at the event and try to coffee chat with them to learn from their experiences
4. Be prepared for informal recruiting to demonstrate your personality
5. When recruiting in circles, go to the people who are not the head recruiters and people who don't have that many people to talk to
6. Ask someone to do a coffee chat if you have a good chat with them
7. When you're applying or networking make sure you show strong interest in the **Firm** not the **Industry**

## SECTION IV: RECRUITING PROCESS

### Coffee Chats + Good Questions to Ask

There are some alumni contacts listed below, feel free to reach out to them and ask for a coffee chat opportunity!

### Some Example Questions to Ask for Coffee chats

- Why did you choose accounting as your career?
- How would you describe the culture at XXX?
- Could you tell me a bit more about what your typical work days look like?
- What's your best memory at XXX?
- What skills do you think are the most important for people who are interested in pursuing this career path?
- Just ask any genuine question you have about someone's experience at the firms!

Those are just several example questions you could ask. Feel free to ask your own questions!

### Helpful Contacts (Search up through LinkedIn)



- **Campus Recruiter:** Karla Regala
- **Alumni:** Jonathan Lam, Derek Houlberg
- **Previous Executive of QAA:** Michelle Lam



- **Campus Recruiter:** Daniel Leone
- **Alumni:** Valerie Ng
- **Executive of QAA:** Natalie Ng, Maddy Bogdan, Lily Atkinson



- **Campus Recruiter:** Clarissa Anderson
- **Alumni:** Robert Scott
- **Executive of QAA:** Kristen Doyle, Keren Wemegah



- **Campus Recruiter:** Ellie Lear, Amanda Pearson, Katie Wilson
- **Alumni:** Adam Drewry, Chloe Freeman, Kobi Lawson
- **Executive of QAA:** Sebastian Casanova, Benjamin Look



## **SECTION IV: RECRUITING PROCESS**

### **IMPORTANT DATES - BIG 4**

**August**

**16 - 24: Applications Released  
17 - 31: Virtual Events**

**September**

**1 - 28: Virtual Events Continued  
19 - 28: Application Deadlines**

**April**

**20 -25: Conference Applications Due**

**\*Dates subject to change based on different firms this is a general timeline to keep an eye out for important deadlines\***



# BIG 4 RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TIMELINES



## First Round of Selection:

- Step 1: Online application - resume and unofficial transcript (no cover letter is required)
- Step 2: On-demand video interview and games
- Once your application has been submitted, you'll receive an email inviting you to undertake both of them.
- It will take you 35 mins to an hour to complete.

## Second Round of Selection:

- Step 3: Live interview
- It will take place in person or virtually depending on situations.

**1**

## First Round of Selection

### Step 1: Online Application

Resume and unofficial transcript (no cover letter is required)

### Step 2: On-Demand Video Interview and Games

- Once your application has been submitted, you'll receive an email inviting you to undertake both of them.
- It will take you 35 mins to an hour to complete.

**2**

## Second Round of Selection

### Step 3: Live Interview

- It will take place in person or virtually.



# BIG 4 RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TIMELINES

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## Deloitte.

### General recruiting timeline for Deloitte

#### August-October

- New Grad recruiting and Internship/Winter Co-op recruiting
- Postings go up in August, interviews begin in September into October (summer internship recruitment for CPA)
- This recruiting focuses on audit roles and happens during On Campus Recruiting (OCR)

#### December-February

- Summer Intern recruiting for other lines of services other than audit/assurance
- Postings go up in December, interviews begin in January into February

#### May-June

- Primarily Fall Co-op recruiting
- Postings go up in May, interviews begin in June

## 1

### First Round of Selection

#### Step 1: Online Application

- Submit your resume, cover letter and unofficial transcript

#### Step 2: One-Way Recorded Video Interview

- Once your application has been submitted, you'll receive an email inviting you to record yourself answering pre-determined questions selected by the firm. You'll receive clear instructions on how to complete the assessment in the email.

## 2

### Second Round of Selection

#### Step 3: Live Interview

- It will take place either in person or virtually.

# BIG 4 RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TIMELINES



- **First Round of Selection:**

- Step 1: Online application - cover letter, resume, and unofficial transcript

- **Second Round of Selection:**

- **Step 2: Game-based assessment**

- You have to finish it within 48 hours after receiving your invitation to the interview
- KPMG will send you a personalized report providing you with insight to help shape your personal development
- There are no right or wrong answers, KPMG simply wants to get to know you better!
- Step 3: Online Interview

*You will receive details on how to access the virtual interview platform (mostly microsoft teams) and download it before your interview, along with more information on some available features through the platform.*

## 1

### First Round of Selection

#### Step 1: Online Application

- Resume, cover letter, and unofficial transcript

## 2

### Second Round of Selection

#### Step 2: Game-Based Assessment

- You have to finish it within 48 hours after receiving your invitation to the interview
- KPMG will send you a personalized report providing you with insight to help shape your personal development
- There are no right or wrong answers, KPMG simply wants to get to know you better!

#### Step 3: Online Interview

- You will receive details on how to access the virtual interview platform (mostly Microsoft teams) and download it before your interview, along with more information on some available features through the platform.



# BIG 4 RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TIMELINES



## First Round of Selection:

- Step 1: Visit "Job Search" to look for opportunities
- Step 2: Fill out your candidate profile and online application. It will take about 30 mins

## Second Round of Selection:

- Step 3: Interview Invite

## Details:

- Questions are related to telling us about yourself, relevant work experience, and your view on current market trends and sector developments.
- Remember it's a two way communication. You can also ask EY some questions related to the scope of the role, their expectations, what they offer and their vision for how you and they could work together.
- Your interview experience will be a combination of in-person, phone and video.
- They may also ask you to complete a written assessment, either online or at a testing center. The exact structure and content will depend on the country, service line and role to which you apply, as different roles need different skills

## 1

## First Round of Selection

### Step 1: Online Application

- Resume, cover letter, and unofficial transcript
- It will take about 30 minutes to fill out your candidate profile and online application

### Step 2: One-Way Recorded Video Interview

- Once your application has been submitted, you'll receive an email inviting you to record yourself answering pre-determined questions from the firm

## 2

## Second Round of Selection

### Step 3: Interview Invite

- It will take place either in person or virtually.



## THE INTERVIEW

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This section of the guide will highlight the steps towards preparing for interviews and also what to expect during the interview process. Not all the questions or examples will be guaranteed during your interview process as the content listed here is developed by students who have shared their personal experience.

### **Pre-Recorded Interview:**

Before attending the live interview, students may be required to conduct a pre-recorded interview via Hirevue. Typically, recruits are given 30 seconds to 1 minute to prepare their response, and 2-5 minutes to respond to the question. Questions are randomized by a question bank, and students are typically given 2+ practice rounds.

- Pre-recorded interviews are usually on the platform Hirevue
- 30 seconds to 1 min to prep for your response, 2-5 minutes to respond to each question
- Random questions from question bank appears, usually 2+ practice rounds

### **Final Round Interview:**

The final round is typically conducted as 1 to 2 interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes each. Generally, you will usually be speaking to one hiring manager and one senior manager/partner, although this may vary between firms and recruitment cycles. With that said, some firms will give you the names of your interviewers ahead of time, so do a quick LinkedIn search to be knowledgeable about your interviewers' experiences!

- 2 consecutive interviews (around 30 min each)
  - 1 with hiring manager (usually), 1 with senior manager/partner
  - Some firms give you names of interviewers ahead of time (do a quick LinkedIn search to be knowledgeable about some of your interviewer's experiences)



# TYPICAL QUESTIONS

## Qualitative

*Some example questions:*

- Tell me about yourself
- Why accounting (or accounting paths) and why our accounting firm
- Why do you want to become a CPA?

Qualitative questions focus on the “why” and the fundamentals of the applicant. You’ll often get the classic “tell me about yourself” question and other questions associated with why you want to go into accounting, why you plan on pursuing your CPA designation, or why you are interested in a position at that specific accounting firm.

## Behavioural and Fit

*Some example questions:*

- What do you do in your free time?
- Why did you choose to go to Queen’s?
- Describe a time you had to juggle multiple tasks/commitments.

Behaviour and fit questions aim to see if you would be a good match with the company culture. Looking past your resume, the interviewer is testing for the compatibility of your values and interests with the values and interests of the firm. Oftentimes, students will be asked about their work ethic, motivations, or personal life to gauge the student’s personality. This is an important consideration for students as well, because generally speaking it is easier to be successful and enjoy work when the company culture is a strong fit.

## Situational-based Questions

*Some example questions:*

- If you were given 2 tasks from your manager and you would not be able to finish both by the deadline, how would you tackle this situation?
- You are introduced to a team with international members to complete a task, how would you work with them?
- Imagine you didn’t want to do a job. Can you tell me about a time you completed a task and why did you do it?

Of the three categories of questions, situational-based questions tend to be the most intimidating for applicants. Situational questions are meant to keep you on your toes and evaluate how you would react in fast-paced or stressful situations. The situations are meant to be difficult, and often depict deadlines, unfavourable tasks, or challenging teams. However, it is important to note that these are not the same as a technical question, which are not typically seen in entry level accounting interviews. Situational questions are used to gauge soft skills, and there is not always one correct answer to the question.





## SECTION VI: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### 1) Sign-up for a mock-interview or coffee chat whenever you'd like!

- Simply head to the link in our Instagram bio to fill out a 1-minute questionnaire so that we can find the right match for you!
- Depending on your answers to the survey, we'll do our best to pair you up with the person who can provide you with the insight and advice you're looking for.

### 2) If you would like someone to look over your Cover Letter and/or Resume, don't hesitate to reach out to a member of our team at [\*\*cochairs@accounting.ca\*\*](mailto:cochairs@accounting.ca).

### 3) Watch out for when our applications to our membership program drop in September!

- From priority access to all of our events, to a CPA mentor, to exclusive member-only workshops, our membership program is one you don't want to miss! Be notified about all of our events and programs by following us on Instagram (@officialqaa).

### 4) Career Advancement Centre (CAC)

- Coaches can assist in resume review, recruitment/networking advice and interview preparation.
- The CAC portal has a wide variety of resources for all Queen's Commerce students.

### 5) Quest

- Quest is a platform where firms who are specifically targeting Queen's commerce students post their job openings. There are lots of fantastic opportunities posted, so be sure to check Quest frequently when September starts, so you are aware of the hiring process.



## SECTION IV: RECRUITING PROCESS

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For the most up-to-date information about Queen's Accounting Association's line-up of events, please visit our social media pages or our website.



@officialqaa



@QueensAccountingAssociation



<https://www.queensaccounting.ca/>

