

Local Government Accounting

Description of the course

Accounting is the process of recording, summarizing and reporting on the financial activities and position of an organization. The purpose of accounting is to provide a record of the organization's current financial position and also to show how that position has been changed over time. Accounting can be compared to a map. A map can be used to determine where you are located right now. It can also be used to identify where you have travelled in the past, that is, how you have arrived at the point where you are now. And it can also be used to plan where you would like to be in the future and choose the route you would like to follow to get there.

Accounting data is accumulated for purposes of both general information—that is, to communicate important information about the organization to interested people—and for decision-making purposes—that is, to use past historical information as a guide for what to do in the future. In government, accounting also plays an important role in keeping elected officials accountable. Government is the only organization in society that has the legitimate right to coerce members of society. How does this relate to the course? It relates in that governments have the right to take people's assets away from them in the form of taxation. In order to assure the legitimacy of government, it must account for the assets it has commandeered in the form of taxes and explain where the money went by showing the cost of services provided. Government financial statements play a significant role in providing this accountability.

The purpose of this course is to give participants a thorough understanding of all aspects of the accounting cycle. The modules in the course will lead participants through the accounting cycle to demonstrate every aspect of accounting from recording transactions to preparing financial statements.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the overall accounting cycle
- Read the three main financial statements of any organization
- Illustrate the differences between cash and accrual accounting
- Define the concept of fund accounting
- Explain why fund accounting is used in government
- Explain the basis of the accounting equations: $Assets = Liabilities + Equity$ and $Assets = Liabilities + Municipal Position$
- Use a T-account
- Record transactions from a scenario using a T-account's debits and credits
- Illustrate the use of specialized and general journals

- Distinguish between financial and non-financial assets
- Record transactions affecting cash
- Design an effective internal control system
- Explain the difference between a perpetual inventory system and a periodic inventory system
- Use excess funds to make short-term investments
- Record common transactions in the Taxes Receivable account
- Record receivables that are not considered taxes receivable
- Record prepayment expenses and expiration of insurance policies
- Define the term “physical asset” and apply at least two methods of recording physical assets in municipalities
- Record transactions related to accounts payable, accrued wages, taxes and other withholdings, and short-term borrowing
- Calculate interest on money borrowed for short-term purposes
- Record transactions related to accrued interest and long-term debt
- Recognize which employee benefit obligations may result in liabilities
- Maintain a formal and informal record of commitments
- Distinguish among the kinds of activities that occur in the various funds other than the operating fund
- Determine which funds are affected by a particular transaction
- Record transactions related to capital funds, sinking funds, reserve funds, reserves, trust funds, and enterprise funds
- Apply the appropriate procedure to ensure that the accounts are in balance at year end
- Use general ledger accounts to prepare year-end financial statements
- Recognize the principles that must be followed in the presentation of financial statements
- Prepare closing entries
- Make accounts ready for the beginning of the next year
- Prepare consolidated financial statements

Course Outline

Module 1 This module begins at the end of the cycle by illustrating what financial statements look like and by discussing their use. It might seem odd to begin a course at the end of the accounting cycle, but the purpose is to begin by showing you what the end product of the various steps described in the later modules will be. This should help you understand why you need to do some of the things shown in the later modules and give you an idea of the look of the end product toward which you are working.

Module 2 Module 1 started at the end of the accounting cycle and discussed the financial statements which are the end product of the accounting cycle. This module goes back to the beginning of the process and discusses how transactions are recorded in the first instance and how those transactions start to move through the accounting system so that the financial statements discussed in Module 1 may be produced.

Module 3 This module will provide a discussion of these special issues relating to assets.

Module 4 This module completes the accounts in the Statement of Financial Position by discussing transactions relating to liabilities and municipal position. After completing this module, you should be able to handle most transactions that will be found in a typical municipality.

Module 5 This module begins with a discussion of typical transactions involving the capital fund and moves on to all the other funds discussed in Module 1, illustrating the method of handling inter-fund transactions in the various funds.

Module 6 This module closes the circle in an annual accounting cycle. In Module 1, we looked at the finished product of the accounting cycle—the financial statements—but we did not discuss how they were prepared. In Modules 2 through 5, we started at the beginning and discussed how individual transactions were recorded. This module ties these things together by illustrating how we group those entries and ledger accounts and use them to prepare the financial statements.

Required Readings

All additional readings provided for this course are links to websites:

Module 1

Accounting Standards Oversight council. (2017). *Accounting Standards Oversight Council Terms of Reference*. Retrieved from <http://www.frascanada.ca/accounting-standards-oversight-council/what-we-do/terms-of-reference/index.aspx>

Public Sector Accounting Board of Canada. (2007). *PSAB: What it is and what it does*.

Denning, M. J. (2015). *Governments are different*.

Module 3

Alberta Municipal Affairs. (2010). *A quick guide to municipal financial statements*. Retrieved from http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_financial_information_return_statements

Beauchamp, T. (2009). Municipalities on the move. *CA Magazine*, 142(7), 49-51. Retrieved from <https://www.cpacanada.ca/-/media/site/cpa-magazine/ca-magazine/camagazine-september-2009.pdf?la=en&hash=0A9E2977532910F74ABA818A98EA74906E18137A>

Graded Assignments

Discussion Boards:

Grade Value: 5%

Students are required to participate in all 4 online discussions. Each online discussion will consist of an initial posting on the discussion topic and response postings (comments) either in response to a classmate's posting or as an augmentation of your initial posting. Students will have

approximately one week to meet the requirements of each discussion board. Focused online discussions allow students to express their understanding of information that is covered in each of the modules, to discuss that information with classmates and their instructor, and to integrate the results of those discussions into their own learning.

Essay 1:

Grade Value: 15%

Essay 2:

Grade Value: 25%

Final Assignment:

Grade Value: 40%

The final assignment is cumulative. Students are given one week to complete the assignment.

Evaluation Criteria

Essays

Essays in all courses are evaluated according to the following criteria:

Thesis (Grade Weight = 20%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is clearly stated, creative, original and insightful • Presents a Point of View (POV) based on a critical analysis of factual evidence and relevant theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is clearly stated and insightful • Presents a POV based on an assessment of factual evidence and may refer to relevant theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is lacking in clarity and precision • Presents a POV based on a limited assessment of factual evidence and on common knowledge, generalizations and some theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is poorly stated, ambiguous or absent • Fails to present a POV or presents a POV that is not based on analysis of factual evidence relevant theory or any other viable form of support

Background and Course Content (Grade Weight = 20%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of the thesis is concise, focused explicitly situated (relevant to the community of learners and practitioners), contextualized (related to real life scenarios for practitioners) and draws on the student’s personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of the thesis is clear and somewhat situated and contextualized • The essay contains some background information that is not central to the thesis so the focus on the thesis sometimes waivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of the thesis is somewhat clear, but too much time is given to contextualizing and situating the thesis • The extra emphasis on the background and context tends to draw the focus of the essay away from the central thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis is neither situated nor contextualized in terms of practical professional experiences and/or situations • Focus on the thesis is poor or absent

Research, Supporting Data and Analysis (Grade Weight = 25%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a clear grasp of the complexity of the issues arising from the thesis • Refers to a full range of relevant current resources (course materials, external sources), and contemporary research findings • Uses relevant data, analyses and conclusions to conduct a thoroughly and objective examination of the validity of the thesis • Includes a critical analysis of the sources used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an understanding of the central issues arising from the thesis • Refers to current sources, including contemporary research findings • Draws on related analyses and conclusions that support the thesis • Uses a somewhat uncritical analysis of this information to examine the validity of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an appreciation for some of the issues arising from the thesis • Refers to current sources, research, opinions, and observations that support the thesis • The resources, evidence, and analyses used are somewhat limited in scope • Information is used in an uncritical way to examine the validity of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to indicate an appreciation or understanding of issues that arise from the thesis • Makes limited or no reference to current sources, contemporary research or other forms of factual evidence, opinions or analyses to support the thesis • Does not use the information that is presented to assess the validity of the thesis

Conclusions (Grade Weight = 15%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions are clear, creative and insightful • Contain a clear, cogent reiteration of and support for the central points of the thesis • Thorough careful analysis confirms the superiority of this POV over other POVs. • The conclusions are based on arguments that are developed throughout the essay and offer a convincing defense of thesis and a compelling, insightful closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions are clear and valid • Contain a cogent reiteration of the central points of the thesis • A careful analysis tends to support the superiority of this POV over a competing POV • The conclusions support the main hypothesis of the essay and provide a convincing sense of closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions are offered but in a disorganized way • The central points of the thesis are reiterated • Analysis supports the thesis but little consideration is given to other POVs. • The thesis defense is somewhat successful but there is only a limited sense of closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions are vague or absent • There is little or no reiteration of the central points of the thesis • Analysis is weak and offers limited support for the thesis and does not consider alternative POVs • Fails to defend the thesis adequately and provides no sense of closure

Writing Style and Essay Structure (Grade Weight = 10%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay is very well organized • Central ideas are presented very clearly, cogently and effectively • Thesis is insightful and creative and functions as a unifying factor throughout the paper • There is a critical analysis and integration of ideas throughout the paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay is well organized • Central ideas are presented clearly, and effectively • Thesis is sound and imaginative and is referred back to frequently throughout the paper • Paper is analytical and relationships between ideas are clearly developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parts of the essay are less well organized • Central ideas are fairly clear, but could be presented more effectively and consistently • Thesis is generally sound but utilized inconsistently as a unifying factor in the paper • Paper presents some analysis and integration of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay lacks organization • Central ideas are unclear and poorly presented • Thesis is unclear and lacking in insight, creativity and soundness • Paper is neither analytical nor integrative

Grammar and Mechanics (Grade Weight = 10%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sources are cited accurately • Minimal spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors • Essay submitted on time (or delayed, with instructor permission) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sources are cited correctly • A few spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors • Essay submitted late (marks deducted at instructor's discretion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sources are cited incorrectly or inappropriately • Some spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors • Essay submitted late (marks deducted at instructors discretion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources not cited or cited incorrectly or inappropriately • Excessive spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors • Essay submitted very late

Thesis	(Grade Weight = 20%)
Background and Course Content	(Grade Weight = 20%)
Research, Supporting Data and Analysis	(Grade Weight = 25%)
Conclusions	(Grade Weight = 15%)
Writing Style and Essay Structure	(Grade Weight = 10%)
Grammar and Mechanics	(Grade Weight = 10%)

Discussion Boards

Discussion Postings (includes initial and response postings) in all courses are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates an understanding of a course concept. This applies to your initial and response posts, and includes the following elements:

- Are your posts relevant to the assigned topic and question?
- Do your posts demonstrate accurate understanding of course material?
- Does the subject field convey the essence of your post (in less than 10 words)?

Important Note for Quality Posts: While your posts will often draw on past experiences and informed opinions, the most successful posts will support personal opinions with reference to the course material.

2. Advances the discussion by adding new knowledge. This applies to your response posts, in which you should try to broaden the perspective presented in another post by building on their ideas or pushing those ideas in a new direction. Some possible ways to do this are:

- Apply references to course material/theoretical concepts.
- Provide a comparable example from your own work experience thereby extending the original idea, but with a new 'twist'.
- Provide a counter-example based on personal experiences that refute or weaken the position taken by the initial author (e.g. I hear you say this...., but my experience suggests this...)
- Apply a related concept from the course that the initial post did not refer to.
- Apply a related example from current events or some other resource.

Basic Requirements for Course Assignments

File Types: assignments must be submitted on the Course Site in MS Word .doc, .docx, or in .rft format. (These file types can be opened in Brightspace and receive comments; other formats such as .wpd cannot).

All assignments should be in 12 Times New Roman (TNR) font, double-spaced with a 1" margin on each side. Each assignment should be approximately 10 pages in length.

Each page should include the student's name and page numbers in the header or footer.

Each assignment should have a cover sheet as part of the document that has the following: course name, student's full name, instructor's name and essay title (ie. Essay Assignment #1).

Software and Technology Requirements

This course will use Brightspace learning management system for class communications, content distribution, and assessments.

Log on to: **dal.brightspace.com**

To access the course:

Username: Your College of Continuing Education username cXXXX.cce

Initial Password: Your College of Continuing Education password (it is recommended that you change this password and keep it in a safe place as we are unable to reset it at the College).

For this course, you will need a reliable and frequent access to a computer and to the Internet. You might also need a headset with a microphone or speakers and a microphone to be able to listen to online resources and conduct other activities in the course (not needed in all courses).

Brightspace supports the most common operating systems:

PC: Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista

Mac: Mac OS X Mavericks

Note: computers using Windows XP, Windows 8 RT and OS X 10.6 or lower are no longer supported. Also please ensure that you have the most recent Adobe program downloaded to be able to access certain types of files on Brightspace.

Technology issues are not an excuse for missing a course requirement – make sure your computer is configured correctly and address issues well in advance of deadlines.

Help Desk Information

For technology or computer issues, you should contact the Help Desk at Dalhousie University.

Phone: 902-494-2376

Toll-free: 1-800-869-3931

Email: helpdesk@dal.ca

Operating Hours

Fall & Winter Hours

08:00am - 12:00am Monday - Friday

10:00am - 12:00am Saturday - Sunday

Summer Hours (May – Aug)

08:00am - 09:00pm Monday - Friday

08:00am - 06:00pm Friday

10:00am - 06:00pm Saturday – Sunday

You will find tutorials online under ‘Student Supports’ that will familiarize you with various aspects of Brightspace.

For issues related to course content and requirements, please contact your instructor.

Student Instructor Interaction

Instructors are committed to providing a learning experience through thoughtful planning, implementation and assessment of course activities. They are committed to being readily available to students throughout the course by:

1. Replying to emails within 24-48 hours.
2. Returning graded course work with feedback within 7-10 days of each assignment due date.

Brightspace and Privacy

While connected to Dalhousie University’s Learning Management System (Brightspace), students may be tracked for their use of the features and tools. For the life of the online course/program, all administrators and instructors with access to the course can request full or partial reports of tracked data for any student(s). Instructors may use tracked information to help determine grades—specifically date stamps on discussion postings and assignment file uploads are used to determine if activities were completed by a specific deadline, and to calculate late penalties if applicable.

Aggregate class and data is used by administrators to study usability, access, and pedagogical issues in the online learning environment.

Brightspace tracks each student’s use of all course tools and features, including:

- Entry time into each tool and feature
- Exit time from each tool and feature
- Time spent in each tool and feature per session
- Time spent in each tool and feature during the entire course
- Total time in Brightspace
- Number of Brightspace sessions
- Discussion messages read
- Discussion messages posted
- Mail messages read

- Mail messages sent
- Calendar entries viewed
- Calendar entries added
- Assignments read
- Assignments submitted
- Content files viewed
- Web links viewed
- Media library collections viewed
- Media library entries viewed

Academic Integrity

The commitment of the College of Continuing Education is to graduate future leaders of business, government and society who manage and lead with integrity. So when you submit any work for evaluation in this course or any other, please ensure that you are familiar with your obligations under Dalhousie University's Academic Integrity Policies. Dalhousie offers many ways to learn about academic writing and presentations; so that all members of the University community may acknowledge the intellectual property of others. Knowing how to find, evaluate, select, synthesize and cite information for use in assignments is called being "information literate." Information literacy is taught by Dalhousie University Librarians in classes and through online tutorials. See guides and tutorials at http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/student-resources.html

Do not plagiarize any materials for this course. Further guidance on what constitutes plagiarism, how to avoid it, and proper methods for attributing sources, *please see* <http://plagiarism.dal.ca/Student%20Resources/>

Furthermore, the University's Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer readable format, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by Safe Assign anti-plagiarism software. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

Diversity and Nondiscrimination

Dalhousie University is committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the worth and dignity of every person. The University recognizes the diversity of its students and is committed to providing a learning experience in which students are able to participate, without discrimination on grounds prohibited by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. In particular, the University is committed to facilitating students' access to the University's academic programs, activities, facilities and services.

The University seeks to develop and nurture diversity and encourages each individual to reach his or her own potential. Dalhousie University prohibits discrimination against any member of the university community on the basis of race, religion, color, age, gender, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, marital status, parental status, disability, source of income, political belief and sexual orientation.

The University is obliged to make every reasonable effort short of undue hardship to take substantial, timely and meaningful measures to eliminate or reduce the discriminatory effects of the learning and community environment.

Course Evaluation

At the end of each course, you will be invited and encouraged to complete a formal course evaluation. Evaluations provide an opportunity to provide honest and anonymous feedback on course content and instruction quality. Your feedback contributes to continuous improvement of our courses. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions on the course/program. Thank you for engaging in this process. All responses will be held in strictest confidence.

Special Needs and Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to self-identify and make a request for accommodation. The request for accommodation must be made reasonably in advance of the course or program in relation to which accommodation is being sought so that a decision can be made. The University will consider a request for accommodation made by a third party (physician, family member, caregiver, advocate or other representative) only where the student has provided prior written consent.

A request for accommodation must include the reasons for the accommodation, supporting documentation, the accommodation being requested and suggestions as to how the accommodation can be achieved, copies of medical reports (if applicable) to substantiate the request and where the request relates to a learning disability, a report describing the nature of the disability.

Disability Statement

In an effort to create a classroom environment that maximizes the success of all students, we encourage you to make us aware of any barriers that may inhibit your learning. Please feel free to ask any time about concerns or questions you may have about assignments, activities, or examinations.

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Dalhousie University College of Continuing Education

Local Government Program

1459 LeMarchant Street, Suite 2201

PO Box 15000

Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4R2

Tel: (902) 494-2526

Toll Free: 1-800-565-8867

Fax: (902) 494-3662

E-mail: locgovt@dal.ca

www.continuinged.dal.ca

